

**INTRODUCTION TO EPC  
[EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION]**

Reproduced from European Political Co-operation (EPC)  
Press and Information Office  
Federal Republic of German  
Fifth Edition  
1988

# I. Introduction to EPC

European Political Co-operation (EPC) among the twelve Member States of the European Community has become “a central instrument of the pursuit of both national interests and European integration” (Foreign Minister Genscher (113). It has created a unique system of mutual information, consultation, co-ordination and concerted diplomacy among sovereign countries. It is directed towards the goal of a common European foreign policy.

1. EPC dates back to 1969/70. At the summit conference in The Hague, the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the European Community stated on 2 December 1969 that entry upon the final stage of the Common Market means “paving the way for a united Europe capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world of tomorrow and of making a contribution commensurate with its traditions and its mission” (1, para. 3). They instructed the foreign ministers to examine the question of how progress could be made in the field of political unification (1, para. 15).

Given this mandate, the foreign ministers of the then six Member States of the European Community, under the chairmanship of Foreign Minister Walter Scheel, drew up the Luxembourg Report of 27 October 1970 (2), in which the aims and methods of pragmatic co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy were laid down. Community co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy was to be achieved through continuous collaboration among the foreign ministers and the foreign services of the Member States, without any special bodies being set up. The report envisaged above all regular meetings of the foreign ministers and of the directors of political affairs (Political Committee) as well as the creation of working groups. Furthermore, each country was to designate an official from its foreign ministry to liaise with his counterparts in the other countries ('European Correspondent').

At the Paris summit conference on 21 October 1972 (3), the Heads of State or Government voiced the expectation that the policy of unification would enable Europe “to es-

establish its position in world affairs as a distinct entity” and declared their intention “to transform before the end of the present decade the whole complex of their relations into a European Union” (3, para. 7). At the same time they adopted political guidelines for the intensification of political co-operation.

As mandated by the Paris summit conference, the foreign ministers drew up the Copenhagen Report of 23 July 1973 (4), which established the basic obligation of the Member States to consult each other on all important foreign policy questions before adopting their own final positions. At the same time, rules were laid down for collaboration between EPC and the organs of the European Community in the advancement of the process of European unification. The Copenhagen Report also brought about intensified regular consultations at all levels and several practical improvements, notably the establishment of a telex network for direct contact between the foreign ministries.

On 14 December 1973, the foreign ministers published the Document on the European Identity (5), in which they sought to define more closely above all the relations of the Member States of the European Community with other countries of the world as well as their responsibilities and position in world affairs. They also reviewed for the first time the efforts undertaken through EPC to exercise Community responsibility for foreign policy in the course of European unification.

At their Paris summit meeting on 9/10 December 1974 (7), the Heads of State or Government agreed to establish the European Council. They decided to meet at least three times a year (now twice), accompanied by the foreign ministers, “in the Council of the Communities and in the context of political co-operation” in order to discuss Europe’s internal and external problems on the basis of “an overall approach” (7, paras. 2, 3). They reaffirmed their intention to extend EPC to all areas of international affairs which affect the interests of the European Community. They drew attention to the specific working procedures of EPC that had in the meantime been developed—internal elaboration of common positions and concerted external diplomacy—and stressed the special

responsibility of the Presidency for their functioning. They created wider possibilities for participation by the European Parliament (7, para. 4).

In the London Report of 13 October 1981 (10), the foreign ministers took measures to improve further the administrative structures and political decision-making processes of EPC. They defined joint action as the goal of EPC and expressly mentioned for the first time the political aspects of security as a subject of co-operation. The London Report produced numerous practical improvements to EPC instruments and procedures, without affecting the basic structure of EPC: strengthening of the obligation to consult each other, contacts between EPC and third countries, co-operation among the Ten in third countries, support of the Presidency by a mobile team of officials, relations with the European Parliament, incorporation of the Commission into political co-operation and the determination of consultative procedures in the event of a crisis.

In 1981, the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy proposed to their partners the adoption of a "European Act" as a means of making progress along the path towards a European Union. This initiative was also intended to link more closely together the basic pillars of European unification, namely the EC and EPC. New areas of co-operation were to be developed especially in cultural matters and legal harmonization; co-operation in security policy was to be strengthened. Furthermore, the powers of the European Parliament were to be extended and greater use to be made of majority voting in the EC Council, as envisaged in the treaties, instead of the practice of taking decisions by consensus. After protracted negotiations by the Ten, the Solemn Declaration on European Union, which constitutes a major milestone along the path towards the political unification of Europe, was signed by the Heads of State or Government at the European Council in Stuttgart on 19 June 1981 (11, 42).

On 29 June 1985, the European Council in Milan (12) established an intergovernmental conference mandated to "achieve concrete progress on European union". After intensive negotiations, its work resulted in the adoption of the Single European Act. The debate on reform con-

ducted by the Community and its Member States had been activated and advanced not least by the Draft Treaty establishing the European Union presented by the European Parliament on 14 February 1984. The activities of the intergovernmental conference were based above all on the proposals by the Ad Hoc Committee on Institutional Affairs, which had been set up by the European Council in Fontainebleau on 25/26 June 1984. The conference's work on treaty provisions concerning co-operation in foreign policy was also based on a Franco-German draft tabled in Milan.

The Single European Act (SEA-13 -) was signed by the Member States in February 1986 and entered into force on 1 July 1987 after ratification by all Member States.

As a result of the Single European Act, EPC has been enshrined in an international treaty that also covers the European Community, has been bindingly committed to the goal of formulating and implementing a European foreign policy and has obtained improved methods of operation. At the same time, EPC remains open to adjustment in line with future developments and to progressive expansion and intensification. Finally, EPC has been strengthened in institutional terms by setting up a secretariat which assists the Presidency in the discharge of its functions.

The Single European Act also envisages co-operation in questions concerning European security. Like the Solemn Declaration on European Union of 19 June 1983 (11), it stresses that the partners are ready to co-ordinate their positions more closely on the political and economic aspects of security. At the same time, it expressly states that these provisions do not impede the extensive co-ordination of security and defence policy by several partners within the framework of Western European Union and the Atlantic Alliance.

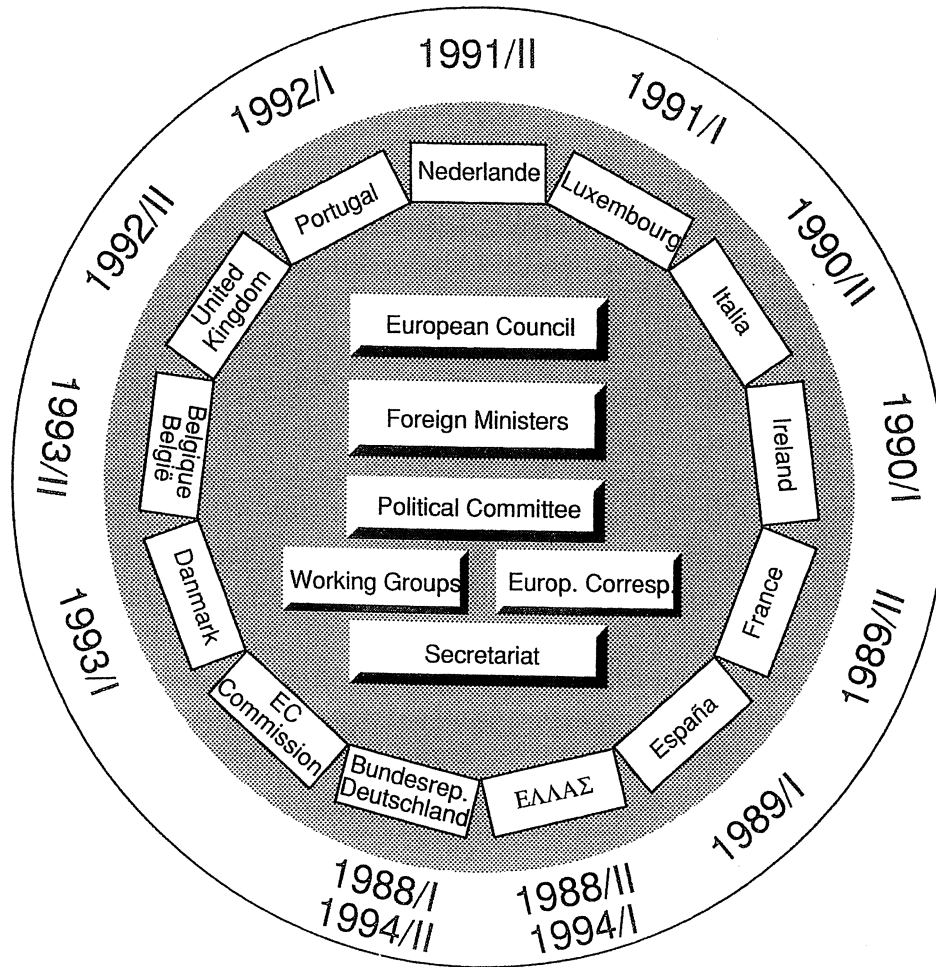
2. European Political Co-operation has become a cornerstone of action by the EC members in the field of foreign policy. The foreign ministers now meet at least six times a year within the framework of EPC; they also come together for deliberations on the fringes of meetings of the EC Council. The Political Committee and the European

Correspondents' Group meet at least once a month. In addition, there are regular meetings of the almost twenty working groups, as well as countless EPC meetings of ambassadors of the Twelve in third countries or of the representative at international organizations and conferences. As a result of a special telex system (COREU), the foreign ministries of the Twelve, the EC Commission and the EPC Secretariat are in direct contact with one another. Every six months a different Member State assumes the Presidency, which, supported by the Secretariat in Brussels, is responsible for co-ordination of EPC and acts as spokesman.

The EPC's main areas of activity correspond to the foreign policy challenges facing the Community of Twelve. In particular they encompass East-West relations, including the CSCE, co-operation within the United Nations, the trouble-spots in the Middle East, southern Africa, Central and Latin America, and the fight against international terrorism. The political and economic aspects of European security are dealt with. Apart from these subjects, the Twelve devote attention to all political developments in the world having repercussions on Europe in some form or other. Of great importance is the commitment of the Twelve to the observance of human rights worldwide.

The continuous treatment of topical issues has increasingly led to the elaboration of common positions and actions. In the early years, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and the Middle East conflict were the central themes of political co-operation (cf. the Middle East declaration issued in Venice on 13 June 1980 (28); again quoted in the declaration of the Twelve of 23 February 1987 on the convening of an international Middle East peace conference (103). Meanwhile, EPC has considerably gained in intensity and scope; numerous new areas have been included, such as the fight against international terrorism (98, 99).

The common external stance and action by the Twelve have demonstrated to the rest of the world the progress made in the process of European unification. This applies to their participation in organizations and conferences (e. g. United Nations (20, 63, 94), CSCE (30, 32, 44, 65, 97),



*This diagram of European Political Co-operation (EPC) shows the seating arrangements at the conference table. The outer ring indicates when each country holds the Presidency. The Federal Republic of Germany holds the Presidency in the first half of 1988 (it assumes the Presidency from Denmark on 1 January 1988 and hands it on to Greece on 30 June 1988). Rotation takes place anti-clockwise. The seating arrangement and the rotation of the Presidency are determined by the alphabetical order of the names of the countries in the respective native language.*

*As from the first half of 1993, each pair of countries will swap positions so that every Member State holds the Presidency alternately in the first and second halves of a year. The original sequence will then apply again as from the first half of 1999. The Federal Republic of Germany will thus assume the Presidency in the second half of 1994.*

*Shown in the centre is the four-tier structures of EPC as well as the Secretariat, which assists the Presidency in its functions.*

CDE (46, 76, 86) and to the increasing consultations between EPC and third States or regional organizations (e. g. ASEAN (21, 43, 95), Central American countries and Contadora Group (48, 67, 102), Euro-Arab dialogue (17). The co-operation among the missions of the Twelve in third countries and the joint stance of the Twelve in diplomatic relations are likewise visible signs of their growing cohesion.

3. EPC has become a second pillar of the process of European unification. A strong stimulation has been detectable especially since the Milan summit conference in June 1985. The process of mutual information and consultation has acquired a surprising intensity. There is a greater political commitment to common positions and action in the field of foreign policy; the co-operation has been extended to new areas. The enlargement of the Community to the South led to the inclusion of new regional ties and interests in EPC and contributed to its stimulation, without slowing down the process of co-ordination.

The Federal Government will continue to employ and promote EPC as a central instrument for the pursuit of both foreign policy interests and European integration. It will in particular use its Presidency during the first half of 1988 to this end. It is thus striving for the goal enshrined in the Single European Act: a common foreign policy within the framework of a European Union.