



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

**Additional Commission contribution to the Intergovernmental Conference on
institutional reform**

Regulations governing European political parties

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Regulations governing European political parties

Since Maastricht the Treaties have expressly acknowledged the role of European political parties. Article 191 of the EC Treaty states: "Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union."

However, in the absence of any operational provision, Article 191 has no more than declaratory status. During the debate in the European Parliament on 14 June 2000, the Commission expressed the view that Article 191 should be expanded and made more explicit in order to provide a clear and transparent legal basis for the organisation of political parties at European level. It announced its intention of bringing forward a proposal to that end.

This initiative follows on from the proposals for the Intergovernmental Conference made by the Commission on 26 January 2000. The Commission had proposed that, in future, some members of the European Parliament could be elected on European lists. This idea leads naturally to the recognition of European political parties and would help make electors more aware of the European dimension of political debate.

There are two procedural options:

- a procedure inspired by that laid down in Article 190(5) EC for the adoption of the regulations governing MEPs (adoption by Parliament after a Commission opinion and approval by the Council, which, the Commission believes, should act by qualified majority);
- the codecision procedure (adoption by Parliament and the Council on a proposal from the Commission).

In its resolution of 13 April 2000¹, Parliament advocated the second option. The Commission agrees that it would be better to use the codecision procedure, which is now well-established, allows each institution to make its contribution and has a proven ability to produce balanced results. On this basis it presents a draft for a new Article 191 below.

The new Article 191 should also lay down a reasonable time-limit for adoption of the regulations. In its resolution, Parliament proposed a time-limit of twelve months.

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¹ "European Parliament's proposals for the Intergovernmental Conference", ref.: PE-232.758. A5-0086/2000.

In conclusion, the Commission proposes that the Conference add to the present Article 191 a legal basis for adopting regulations governing political parties, in particular the conditions governing their recognition and the rules regarding their funding, within a time-limit to be agreed.

Present text of the EC Treaty

ARTICLE 191

Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union.

Proposed text

NEW ARTICLE 191

Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union.

Before [date to be agreed], the Council, acting in accordance with the procedure provided for in Article 251, shall lay down the regulations governing European political parties, in particular the conditions as to their recognition and the rules regarding their funding.