

# EUROPEAN BACKGROUND INFORMATION COMMUNITY

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BACKGROUND NOTE

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## CONVENTION FOR POPULAR ELECTIONS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DUE FOR SIGNING MONDAY

For the first time, citizens of EC member countries will go to the polls, in May or June of 1978, to elect their representatives to the European Parliament as a result of a convention expected to be signed Monday in Brussels.

Once signed, the convention will go to the national parliaments for ratification. There, it should have smooth sailing in countries like the Netherlands but strong opposition from the Labor Party in the United Kingdom.

For the past 24 years, ever since the Community's beginning, members of the Parliament, or "Assembly" as it is officially called, have been appointed from and by the national legislatures, even though the Community's first treaty, the Paris Treaty of 1951, provided for elections by direct universal suffrage.

### Shape of the Convention

The final legal form of the popular elections convention will be known only Monday after its adoption by the EC Council of Ministers. It is certain, however, to follow the draft convention passed by the European Parliament in January 1975 in providing that:

- Initially, each country will choose its own method of voting.
- Elections will be held at the same time throughout the Community, running from a Thursday to the following Sunday and thus allowing each member country to observe its traditional voting days.

- Each country will decide whether its elected members may sit in both its national legislature and in the European Parliament, "hold a dual mandate."

Last July the European Council (or heads of government "Summit") decided on the size of the directly elected Parliament -- 410 seats (instead of the current 198) -- distributed as follows:

Belgium	24	Italy	81
Denmark	16	Luxembourg	6
Germany	81	Netherlands	25
France	81	United Kingdom	81
Ireland	15	Total	<u>410</u>