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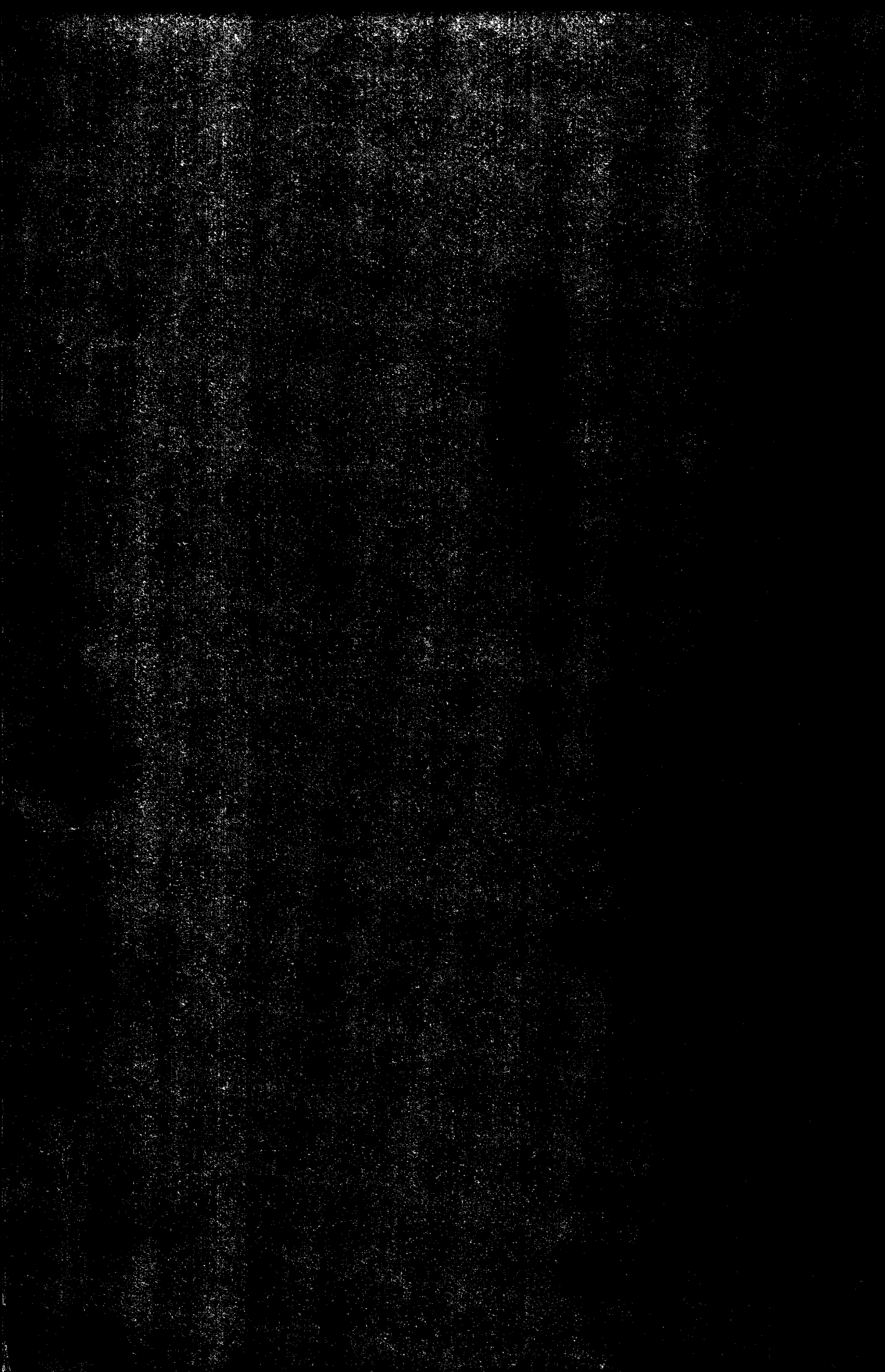
DOCUMENT 1-542/81

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport

on the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-237/81) concerning the opening of the Communities' historical archives to the public

Rapporteur: Mr O. SCHWENCKE



By letter of 14 May 1981 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament to deliver an opinion on the proposals contained in the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council on the opening of the Communities' historical archives to the public.

On 20 May 1981 the President of the European Parliament referred this communication to the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport as the committee responsible.

On 23 June 1981 the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport appointed Mr SCHWENCKE rapporteur.

It considered the proposals at its meeting of 23/24 September 1981. At the same meeting the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement.

Present: Mr Pedini, chairman; Mr Hahn, vice-chairman; Mr Schwencke, rapporteur, Mr Del Duca, Mr Papapietro, Mrs Viehoff and Mr Wedekind.

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A

The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council concerning the opening of the Communities' historical archives to the public .

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council (COM(81)179/final)¹,
 - having been consulted by the Council (Doc. 1-237/81),
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 May 1981 on the European University Institute²,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport (Doc. 1-542/81),
 - cognizant of the need to take measures in good time to enable the Communities' historical archives to be opened to the public,
1. Welcomes the Commission's communication and the proposals contained in it for a draft ECSC decision and for a draft Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom) opening to the public the historical archives of the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community;
 2. Notes with satisfaction that, under Article 9 of the draft Decision and draft Regulation, each institution may adopt detailed rules for the internal application of the respective texts;
 3. Calls on each institution, therefore, to proceed in good time with the adoption of such rules, which should cover such matters as management, access and, in particular, the selection of archive material and its classification, where necessary, in the light of considerations of security or confidentiality;

¹ OJ No. C 132 of 2.6.1981, p.6,

² OJ No. C 144 of 15.6.1981.

4. Confirms its decision of 5 May 1981 to deposit its own archives alongside those of the Commission at the European University Institute in Florence and, for practical as well as political reasons, urges the other institutions to do likewise;
 5. Calls for the creation of an inter-institutional body to assume responsibility for the joint management of the archives;
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6. Calls on the governments of the Member States to consider placing in the Communities' historical archives all material relating to the drawing up of the Treaties of Paris and Rome;
 7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and report to the Commission, to the Council, to the Court of Justice and to the Court of Auditors.

B

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. In 1978 the Commission decided that the time had come to open the Communities' historical archives to the public. In this it was following the example of other international organizations (e.g., the United Nations, the Western European Union and the Council of Europe) which had already introduced rules or made internal arrangements giving the public access to their archives. The Commission felt that there were two further, specifically Community reasons for such a move. These were:

- (i) access for researchers to the historical archives would encourage research on Community history, thereby stimulating public interest in the process of European integration;
- (ii) public access to the historical archives would make the workings of the European institutions more open to public scrutiny. (In general, the public still regards the institutions as rather secretive).

2. Your rapporteur endorses the Commission's reasoning and the general framework set out in the draft Commission Decision (ECSC) and the draft Council Regulation (EEC and Euratom). He notes with particular approval that Article 9 safeguards the freedom of each institution to decide on its own detailed implementing provisions, and he supports the provision in Article 5 for a review procedure for declassification of documents graded confidential or higher. He further endorses Article 6 which lays down that Member States shall refrain from releasing documents and records held in national archives, but identical with those contained in the archives or historical archives of the Community, on terms less strict than those provided for in the texts.

3. To ensure that public access to the historical archives may indeed be granted on expiry of the 30-year period, your rapporteur feels that each institution should proceed to draw up implementing provisions without delay. ECSC archives are due to be made public in 1983, those of the EEC and the EAEC in 1988; material relating to the latter Communities will have to be reviewed by 1983 at the latest. The drawing up of implementing provisions will involve the adoption of detailed rules for the selection of archive material and will also require that

those institutions which have not already done so should establish a system of security grading. A number of particular problems may require attention: for instance, the difficulties (e.g. availability of staff) faced by the smaller institutions in carrying out the selection process; the treatment of personal files; questions touching parliamentary immunity, and so forth. Other questions, such as the choice of suitable storage and retrieval systems, guides to research, and so on should also be considered and, ideally, the institutions should work together to ensure compatibility in these fields.

4. Your rapporteur further endorses the Commission's view that the historical archives of all the Communities' institutions should be centralised. The Commission has decided to deposit its own records, which constitute the major part of the Communities' archives, at the European University Institute in Florence. In its resolution of 5 May 1981 on the European University Institute, the European Parliament decided to do likewise. It would be highly desirable for all other Community institutions to follow suit, both in the interests of practicality and because to isolate smaller collections from the main body of Community archives could only undermine the Community's claim to cohesion. Regardless of decisions concerning location, it is essential that an inter-institutional body should be set up to coordinate the establishment of the archives and manage them once they are in operation.

5. In order to provide the general and scholarly publics with the fullest possible information on the process of European integration, and especially its most crucial formative stages, it is felt that records relating to the Treaties of Paris and Rome should be made available by the Member Governments for inclusion in the Communities' archives.