

P R E S S R E L E A S E

481

**Strasbourg, 1 April 1998
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**11TH QUADRIPARTITE MEETING
EUROPEAN UNION/COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

Strasbourg, 1 April 1998

1. The 11th quadripartite EU/Council of Europe meeting was held in Strasbourg on 1 April 1998 on the initiative of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The meeting was attended by:

- Mr Doug HENDERSON, President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, Minister for Europe of the United Kingdom, and M. Hans VAN DEN BROEK, Member of the European Commission,
 - Mr Helmut SCHÄFER, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Mr Daniel TARSCHYS, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.
2. The exchange of views focused first on the process of enlargement of the European Union initiated by the Heads of State and Government in Luxembourg in December 1997.

The Presidency of the Council of the Union observed that the enlargement process, to which the Union was fully committed, had now been successfully launched. Diplomatic meetings in Europe in the last few weeks had led to very positive results with regard to future negotiations.

All participants expressed great satisfaction, stressing the particular significance of this new phase in European construction.

The participants emphasized the importance of honouring the commitments entered into by the member countries of the Council of Europe, especially as regards the defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The representatives of the European Union recalled that these commitments were also important in the context of the political criteria for accession to the European Union laid down in the Copenhagen European Council conclusions. They were also relevant for the European Union's relations with other European States.

3. The participants discussed the activities of the various international organizations in, for example, Belarus, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. They welcomed moves to improve cooperation and coordination between the Council of Europe and the OSCE and stressed the importance of pursuing this objective. They also welcomed the progress in the current negotiations in the OSCE concerning the development of a Cooperative Security Platform. That exercise, the initiative for which lay with the European Union, will allow more active cooperation between international organizations in order to ensure optimum use of their individual resources.

They noted the formal application of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to join the Council of Europe and considered that this implied a wish by the FRY to respect the Organisation's values - democracy, human rights, rule of law - throughout the territory of the FRY. At the same time, they noted that several aspects of the present situation in the FRY, in particular in Kosovo, are a cause for great concern.

4. The participants noted that the number of programmes - signed or under discussion - for cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Community had increased considerably in the last few months.

The joint programmes decided on recently or under consideration are set out in the Annex.

5. The participants discussed the Action Plan decided on by the Second Summit of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg on 10 and 11 October 1997.

The representatives of the Council of Europe asked for the Union's help in implementing the Action Plan and put forward a number of specific measures, notably concerning the fight against corruption and organised crime, money-laundering, minorities, bio-ethics, education for democratic citizenship and new information technologies.

The representatives of the Union took note of these proposals and stated their willingness to examine them in a constructive spirit.

6. The representatives of the Council of Europe referred to the discussion currently taking place within the Council of the Union on the proposal for a Recommendation on the suitability of blood and plasma donors and the screening of donated blood. They wanted the Community to take due account of the criteria adopted in the Council of Europe. The representatives of the Union gave their assurance that that would be done.
7. As regards youth, participants welcomed plans to develop cooperation in a number of areas. The representatives of the Council of Europe wanted to be able to coordinate their action on voluntary European service for young people with that of the Union. The representatives of the Union stated that they were entirely amenable, given that cooperation would comply with the agreed procedures.
8. The informal dialogue established in 1996 between the Council of the Union and the Council of Europe on matters of common interest had continued over the last few months.

Thus in December 1997 the Education Committee of the Council of the European Union met the representatives of the Council of Europe for an exchange of views on the possibility of cooperation in fields such as: education in democratic citizenship, the learning and teaching of modern languages, higher education (recognition of diplomas in the context of the NEIC/NARIC networks and examination of a supplement to diplomas), teacher training and the Eudised and Eurydice databases.

The members of the K.4 Committee and the representatives of the Council of Europe met for the third time on 6 March 1998. The discussion concerned mutual assistance in criminal matters, the fight against corruption, money laundering, high-tech crime, the sexual exploitation of children, organized crime, enlargement of the European Union, as well as racism and xenophobia.

On 16 April there is to be an informal discussion between the members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the Council of Europe. That discussion will centre on new technologies and more particularly on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which those technologies may entail for culture.

The Presidency of the Council of the Union wanted the Council of Europe to participate in the Conference it was organizing at Bramshill on 20 and 21 May on human rights and the police.

- 9. The participants welcomed the forthcoming conclusion of an agreement between the Community and the Council of Europe concerning the cooperation between the latter and the European Monitoring Centre in Vienna – the Management Board of which held its first meeting on 21 January 1998.**

The decision to make 21 March of each year the "Day of Cultural Diversity" in educational establishments will make it possible to make young people aware of the value of tolerance and of the dangers of racism and xenophobia.

The Presidency of the Council of the Union announced that it would be inviting the Council of Europe to the seminar it was to organize on race relations.

The joint programmes recently decided upon or under consideration concern:

- 1. The third "Albania" programme, for a total of ECU 1 725 000, of which ECU 1 315 000 will be borne by the Community, for assistance with the reform of the legal system and institutional rebuilding;**
- 2. a joint programme for the three Transcaucasian Republics (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) for legal reform, reinforcement of human rights and the promotion of independent media. That programme would total ECU 540 000, half being borne by the Community;**
- 3. the second contract in favour of Ukraine (February 1997 to June 1998), which is currently being implemented. That contract covers legal system reform, local government reform and the transformation of the law enforcement system. The Community contribution is ECU 524 000 out of a total of ECU 927 000. The third contract entered into force in December 1997 and will run until October 1999, with a Community contribution of ECU 498 000 out of a total of ECU 760 000;**
- 4. the second contract with Russia (February 1997 to January 1999), implementation of which is in hand, with a Community contribution of ECU 1 182 000 out of a total of ECU 2 551 000. It covers the strengthening of the federal structure, the introduction of human rights protection mechanisms and legal system reform. Examination of a third contract in favour of Russia has already begun at the request of the Council of Europe; that contract would be in the region of ECU 1 950 000, of which ECU 1 000 000 would be borne by the Community;**
- 5. the programme for Moldova, which entered into force in September 1997 and runs until March 1999 (legal reform and the promotion of independent media). Cost of the programme: ECU 286 000, of which ECU 148 000 will be borne by the Community;**
- 6. the second contract (June 1997 - June 1998) concerning assistance with integration of populations of foreign origin in Estonia and Latvia for a total amount of ECU 500 000, of which ECU 400 000 will be borne by the Community;**

- 7. the fight against corruption and organized crime in the countries in transition (PHARE countries) : Octopus project;**
 - 8. a multilateral programme in favour of national minorities in the countries of Central Europe (June 1996 to March 1998) totalling ECU 380 000, of which ECU 180 000 will be borne by the Community. Extension of that programme is currently being discussed;**
 - 9. Project DEBRA – Ethical review of biomedical research activity – Ethics committees for research in Central and Eastern Europe: this project involves 16 countries (1997 to 1999).**
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