

Speech by Mr Józef Oleksy, Representative of the Sejm of the Republic of
Poland at the plenary session of the Convention
Brussels, 20 January 2003

When we approach the institutional debate we inevitably enter in the sphere of political imagination. But at the same time we face harsh operational and functional reality. It is therefore a good moment to focus on the positive achievements of EU evolution. One of them was and is the community method.

Of course it is not enough to look behind when we are ahead of an unprecedented scale enlargement. But we learn from the past and must try to imagine a future Union working smoothly and effectively.

The effectiveness of the decision-making process will not be achieved without further extension of the qualified majority voting. In my view it should become the general rule with the exceptions clearly defined. A parallel clarification should also concern the substance of the procedure. We should think of simplifying the three steps condition for a QMV decision to be taken. The legislative process based on qualified majority voting must in turn be accompanied by the co-decision of the European Parliament. It is a second rule that will render the decision-making system more democratic.

In fact our debate focuses on defining the sources of legitimacy of the Union. One is the European Parliament with its power to appoint the executive and making the Commission stronger. The second is the national vote with the national parliament forming its government that represents the country in the Council.

If we try to evaluate which source of legitimacy is more true – we risk to go in the wrong way. Therefore, in my opinion, the dual balance must be preserved: that of the member states and that of the supranational factor.

At the very first stage of the Convention proceedings I have expressed my willingness to think of a permanent president of the European Council. A solution which does away with the instability of the rotating presidency and makes the EU more visible. I have also backed the idea of the election of the Commission President by the European Parliament. A solution which reinforces the role of the guardian of the treaties.

In that context the recent Franco-German compromise proposal of co-regency is the affirmation of the will to respect and reinforce both the European Council authority and the democratic character of the Commission. In my view this option deserves further elaboration. Especially with a view to reduce possible ambiguity and nuances concerning the division of responsibilities.

Enlargement will affect the capacity of all institutions to act. Our task should be to increase their efficiency. But our obligation is to guarantee that the situation does not get worse and the institutional balance is maintained.

Thank you for your attention.