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CONTRIB 203

ÜBERMITTLUNGSVERMERK

des Sekretariats
für den Konvent

Betr.: Beitrag von Herrn Sören Lekberg, Mitglied des Konvents
"Wahl des Präsidenten der Europäischen Kommission durch die einzelstaatlichen
Parlamente"

Der Generalsekretär des Konvents hat den oben genannten Beitrag von Herrn Sören Lekberg,
Mitglied des Konvents, erhalten.

Stockholm 19 January 2003

The European Convention

ELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT BY NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

The debate on how the European Commission and its president should be elected is important. The election procedure should reflect the fundamental construction of the European Union. One important aspect is that the EU and the Commission should be anchored among the citizens in the Member States. In this respect, it is essential to remember that the citizens are close to their National Parliament and that the European Convention should ensure that National Parliaments play an important role in the European architecture.

The Commission and the EU would gain legitimacy if the Commission President is elected in a way that involves the National Parliaments. As the Convention Working Group on the role of National Parliaments stated, enhancing the involvement of National Parliaments would help to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the Union and bring it closer to the citizens. Therefore, the European Commission President should be elected by the National Parliaments.

In practical terms, the election procedure could be constructed as follows.

1. The European Council nominates, by a qualified majority, three or four candidates for Commission President. The European Council can be expected to nominate candidates from different political families in the European Union.
2. The European Parliament will then arrange hearings with the nominated candidates. These hearings will probably be covered by European media. The European Parliament should hold an indicative vote on the candidates. This vote will show the level of support for the different candidates in the European Parliament.

3. After the process in the European Parliament is completed, the candidates will have to rally support among the Members of National Parliaments. The candidates will have the possibility to appear in the parliaments. There may also be European wide television coverage of debates between the candidates. Finally, each National Parliament will hold a separate vote and the candidate who receives the highest number of votes is elected President of the European Commission.

All National Parliaments should vote at the same time in order to avoid tactical voting. Each National Parliament would have as many votes as the number of MEPs from that Member State (Germany 99, UK 87, Sweden 22 etc.) The votes from each National Parliament should be proportionally distributed among the candidates. For instance, if 40 % of the members of the Swedish parliament have voted for a certain candidate, this candidate will get 40 % of the 22 Swedish votes (8,8 i.e. 9 votes). Thus, it is not a 'winner takes it all' system. It is most likely that the winning candidate will have support from national parliamentarians in most or even all Member States. How the votes should be counted in a Member State with a bicameral system should be decided by that Member State.

A system of this kind would be a way of giving the National Parliaments an active role in the European Union. Parliamentarians all over the European Union would be involved in the election – more so than if only the European Parliament elected the President. The process would be open and in several steps, which would give the citizens and the parliaments ample time to discuss the candidates before the procedure is completed. The important post as President of the European Commission could not be subject to bargaining among a few Prime Ministers and the elected President would have a clear mandate from parliamentarians all over the EU. The involvement of National Parliaments, which are democratically legitimate and are close to their citizens, means that the confidence among citizens for the European Union is likely to increase.