



SERVICE DE PRESSE ET D'INFORMATION
ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ ΒΡΥΞΕΛΛΩΝ

PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONVENTION

23 - 24 MAY 2002

INTERVENTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HELLENIC GOVERNMENT AND MEMBER OF THE PRAESIDIUM OF THE CONVENTION

Mr George Katiforis MEP

President, fellow Representatives,

The issue for us is efficiency *and* democracy. Some suggest that our dilemma is efficiency *or* democracy. That is the well-known, supposedly technocratic, argument that a state may not be "free" but at least the trains run on time. Free people reject such a dilemma. At least during periods of stability, during periods of peace - and we should not forget that the European Union was created in peacetime and for peace - free people, the citizens of Europe place democracy above all else. That is our general position. Is it confirmed in Community practice over recent years? It would be quietist if we were to give a categorically positive answer.

Starting with efficiency, we can observe in Europe a multiple fracture of functions, a lack of central political co-ordination. The European Central Bank, our great achievement, represents the general monetary interest, but who represents the fiscal, or the regulatory, or the macroeconomic interest? The policy of market competition is not accompanied by industrial policy, by a policy for economic development. Regional policy ignores the possible distortions which it may cause to the market, the Stability Pact ignores the consequences for employment. One could multiply the instances which have created in the public mind the feeling that Europe is governed by various separate "offices", that each "office" invokes certain Articles of the Treaty, but that no one deals with the general political synthesis. The European Parliament, which could be one of the places for such synthesis, is in an inferior position with respect to the Commission and Council, since it is a co-legislator in only fifty per cent of the rules which are enacted by the Union. Here the lack of co-ordination, i.e. the lack of effectiveness, overlaps with the lack of democratic legitimacy.

The phenomenon of the coincidence of these two deficiencies is reinforced also by the multiplication of specialised organs. We had to have the calling-together of our Convention for the public in general to learn that in combination with the Commission, there are 244 executive committees to which 1742 acts were sent during the year 2000, and that there were 4323 meetings. Next to the formal organs which are laid down in the Treaty, there has developed a whole bureaucratic jungle which is characterised both by lack of transparency and by lack of efficiency.

The tools which move this system are legal tools and not political ones. In today's Europe, legalism has predominated over politics and management over action. The result is that the European public loses its confidence in the Community institutions and, - because we live in a period of serious crises in the economy and in the security situation - to seek protection once again in the nation-state, because that is the tried solution familiar to the population. Our Convention must seek solutions which will reinforce political functions within the framework of the Union. Less Europe, the choice of framework legislation under which many substantive items are sent to national parliaments, however desirable the reinforcement of the role of national parliaments may be, cannot lead to solution.

We must seek the solution through the existing institutional triangle, and not outside of it. We have, maybe, the good luck, with greater democracy to be able to cure a large part of this lack of efficiency as well. Otherwise we are in danger of finding ourselves in a state without democratic legitimacy, together with a state where the trains do not run on time.

George Katiforis MEP
Brussels, 23 May 2002