

50th Anniversary: The Paris Summit October 1972

Tony Brown



On 19 October 2022, the 50th anniversary will occur of an event of historic importance in the evolution of Ireland's engagement with the European Community, and later the European Union.

On that day the Heads of State or Government of the six founding Member States of the European Community welcomed to Paris their counterparts from the three European states which had responded to the invitation in the Treaty of Rome to "the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts."

For Ireland's political leaders this coming together with colleagues from eight other European democracies marked the culmination of more than a decade of initiative, rebuff and renewed commitment to a vision famously articulated by the then Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, in his address to the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community on 18 January 1962, when he outlined the reasoning behind Ireland's application for membership of the Community.

The Paris Summit was critical in giving formal reality to the Community's first enlargement and in setting out an agenda of aspiration and action for the nine members of the new European Community, not least the far-reaching goals of Economic and Monetary Union and eventual European Union. Among its significant commitments, the Paris Summit highlighted the need for progress in the field of Social Policy. Building on the limited Treaty references to ensuring 'economic and social progress' and the creation of the European Social Fund, the leaders at Paris gave a clear mandate to the incoming European Commission to produce and implement a comprehensive programme of action in areas of social concern.

Referendum

In Ireland, the referendum on EEC entry took place on 10 May 1972 and the result was clear-cut. With a turnout of 71%, the "yes" vote was 83.1% with 16.9% voting "no". The Oireachtas then approved the European Communities Bill, giving effect in the State to the negotiated accession terms, in November 1972. In the UK, the European Communities Act received Royal Assent in October 1972. In Denmark, a referendum was held on EEC membership with 63.3% voting in favour with

36.7% against. In Norway a referendum in September 1972 resulted in rejection of membership by 53.5% to 46.5%.

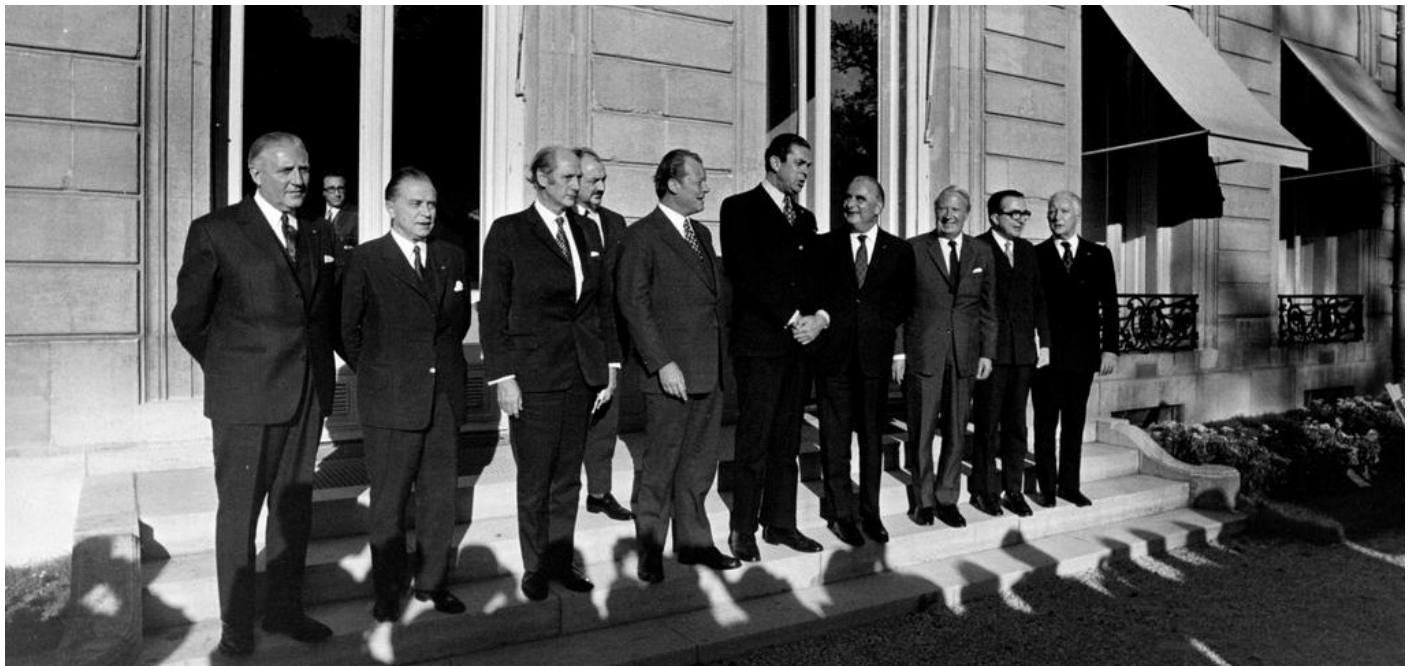
Thus, the EEC expanded from six to nine members on 1 January 1973. As the Irish referendum results were confirmed, the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, and Foreign Minister, Patrick Hillery, were reported as having "a strong reason to be satisfied about the outcome of more than ten years of diplomacy. They had secured Ireland's primary foreign policy goal: full membership of the EEC."

With the ratification formalities concluded, the date for accession was fixed for 1 January 1973. It was agreed that a Summit meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the Nine should be held before the end of 1972 but it was also accepted that such a historic gathering must yield practical results. Accordingly, a series of preparatory meetings were held between February and September involving Foreign Ministers, Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors. An ad hoc committee met regularly to deal with a range of issues – economic and monetary affairs, regional policy, social questions, the institutions, external policy, political cooperation and policy towards the developing countries.

On 15 September 1972, the French President, Georges Pompidou, wrote to the other national leaders, and to the President of the European Commission, inviting them to meet in Paris on 19-20 October. He wrote that:

This meeting is the fitting occasion for a new and important phase in the history of the European Economic Communities. It will allow us to consolidate and pursue an economic and social development which over the last fourteen years the countries of the Six have enjoyed. We shall be able to define some new line of concerted action for our ten countries. It will also help us to make our contribution to solving the economic and monetary problems besetting the western world today, by means of decisions on practice or principle concerning our inter-Community relations. I keenly hope that it will promote awareness by the Community Members of their solidarity and the need to affirm Europe's role in the world. In this way we shall respond to the deeply-felt aspirations of the European peoples and to their noblest interests.¹

1. Bulletin of the European Communities Vol. 5, No. 10, 1972



The nine leaders assembled at the Paris Conference Centre on 19 October 1972 and the historic meeting commenced with a series of Opening Speeches which addressed the three agreed themes of the meeting²:

Georges Pompidou, President of the French Republic

I should like to express anew France's satisfaction at welcoming you who bear the major responsibility of the expanding Community, and especially the heads of the governments of Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain. Nonetheless we meet not merely to exchange compliments, but to act; to propose and to decide. To my mind, any hesitancy now would be doubly dangerous. It would risk delaying the construction of Europe. It might also lead governments to allow their determination to lag behind events so that imperceptibly, the Europe created would be a purely mercantile one, which is not and cannot be our goal.

We have undertaken an unprecedented task, and the new members have agreed to join us in the undertaking. It is not normal to attempt to unite States which have been cast by the centuries into highly different moulds and whose interests often diverge. But our countries have no alternative. May the very fact that you are all united today in Paris provide a good omen and a stimulus to those who like myself believe in the need to construct, in this decade, a European Union determined to shoulder its destiny.

Prime Minister of Great Britain, Edward Heath

We are grateful to you Mr. President, both for having been the original advocate of this meeting and for the excellent arrangements you have made for us. For you and for the other existing members of the Community this Conference marks the accomplishment of the process you set in train at The Hague three years ago. For us who are now joining you, it marks the attainment of an objective that has cost us much effort and perseverance. For us all it will point the way towards the future that we shall build together.

So we are here to consolidate what has been achieved; to set the seal upon the enlargement of the Community; and to address ourselves to the future, to the deepening and developing of the Community, to the work of growing together in strength and prosperity, for the good of all our peoples and the benefit of the wider world. This is where the challenge lies. We are at the point where we can begin to realise the wider opportunities for which this Community was created – the European idea that lay in the minds of its founders.

Willy Brandt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Even more important, in my view, than the creation of new institutions are at the present time our efforts to define clearly the aims of our economic policy. For the success of the Community depends to a large extent on whether economic growth, full employment and price stability can be brought into harmony. I am glad that the first item on our agenda also concerns

2 These leaders' speeches can be found in full in the Bulletin of the European Communities Vol. 5, No. 10, 1972. The Bulletin is available online at: <http://aei.pitt.edu/56273/1/BUL091.pdf>

“social progress”. To me it matters very much that our people realise what this Community does and can mean, for the improvement of their living and working conditions. Social justice should not remain an abstract concept and social progress should not be taken to be a mere appendix to economic growth. If we can put social policy into a European perspective, then many of our citizens will find it easier to identify themselves with the Community. I suggest that this Conference instruct the institutions of the Community to prepare without delay a programme of action. As a contribution to this I have had a memorandum drawn up on this subject which has been circulated.

Jack Lynch, Taoiseach, Ireland

It is President Pompidou whom we acknowledge as the initiator of the idea for the holding of such a Conference. That idea today becomes a reality. My Government, confident at that time that Ireland's entry to the European Communities would be endorsed by the people, welcomed the original proposal that a Conference be held. We recognised the need for the members and prospective members of the Communities to come together, prior to enlargement, to take certain decisions. These decisions were most desirable, not only to give impetus and discipline to the important task of integrating the acceding countries into the Communities but also to help the Communities to embark on new tasks and assume those wider obligations which the vision of their founders and the logic of their achievements to date demand. The Community was seen as laying the foundation for the creation of ever-closer union among the European peoples. This surely remains our real goal and all our deliberations at this Conference must be closely related to it.

And there is also a wider question – the question of the democratic content of the Communities and of the need to involve the people as closely as possible with the decisions, policies and workings of the Communities. We should recognise the danger of our peoples growing apart from the Community of their regarding the Community, as it embarks upon major new areas of activity, as some form of monolithic structure increasingly divorced from the type of democratic control as it is known in our nine countries. There are formidable tasks and challenges ahead of

us in the enlarged Community. We have here in Paris an historic opportunity to deal with these tasks and challenges. Our decisions at this Conference will be interpreted as a measure of how our Governments – the Governments of the countries which will constitute the enlarged Community – are prepared to meet the needs of our times, the challenges of the years ahead and the aspirations of our peoples.

Conference Conclusions

The Conference then moved on to debating the agenda which had been agreed in the lengthy preparatory phase. It set out to arrive at decisions on a range of important issues of principle and to set out the necessary programme of work designed to give practical outcomes over the period ahead. The drafting of a comprehensive communiqué³ became the focus for debate and decision. The opening words of the communiqué made clear the scope and scale of what was being attempted, arguing that as “the tasks of the Community are growing and fresh responsibilities are being laid upon it, the time has come for Europe to recognise clearly the unity of its interests, the extent of its capacities and the magnitude of its duties.” It was agreed that the Community had to be able “to make its voice heard in world affairs, and to make an original contribution commensurate with its human, intellectual and material resources” and “to affirm its own views in international relations, as befits its mission to be open to the world and for progress, peace and cooperation.”

The main points agreed by the leaders may be summarised in terms of the following commitments:

- Development of the Community based on democracy, freedom of opinion, the free movement of people and of ideas and participation through freely elected representatives;
- Establishment by 1980 of an economic and monetary union to guarantee stability and growth, ensure solidarity and provide for social progress and an end to regional disparities;
- Economic expansion with the firm aim of enabling disparities in living conditions to be

3

The full text of the communiqué can be found at the following address:
https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/b1dd3d57-5f31-4796-85c3-cfd2210d6901/publishable_en.pdf

- reduced, resulting in an improvement in the quality of life as well as in standards of living;
- Particular attention to intangible values and to protecting the environment, so that progress may really be put at the service of mankind;
 - Increased efforts in development aid and technical assistance to the least-favoured countries and regions, taking account of specific responsibilities arising from history and geography;
 - Encouragement of the development of international trade, applying to all countries without exception, establishing stable and balanced economic relations;
 - Promotion of good neighbourly relations among all European countries whatever their regime through a policy of détente and the establishment of wider economic and human co-operation; and
 - Affirmation of the intention to transform before the end of the present decade the whole complex of relations between Member States into a European union.

Reaction

Speaking in Dáil Éireann on 25 October, 1972, the Taoiseach Jack Lynch gave his reactions and analysis:

The conference itself was characterised by a spirit of friendliness, a desire to make substantial progress, and a determination to overcome problems. This keynote was immediately apparent from the opening statements, all of which sought to highlight areas of accord, rather than to dwell on sources of potential friction.

The many decisions taken at the Summit will clearly mean a heavy burden of work for the Community institutions. In addition to considering the effective functioning of these institutions, related issues such as a wider participation in the European Parliament were also discussed. We therefore eventually agreed with the formula which appeared in the Communiqué. This indicated the general agreement to strengthen the powers of the Parliament, while leaving open the question of a date by which direct election would operate. The blend of principle and pragmatism which went into the preparation of this solution was a splendid example of the Community's ability and will to forge a Europe which can command loyalty, admiration and respect; a Europe which can provide peace, prosperity and a spirit of idealism for its peoples.

Enlargement

Just over ten weeks after the Paris Summit, the first enlargement of the European Communities became a reality as Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom became full Member States on 1 January 1973.

One significant issue which was addressed in the weeks before the day of accession was the composition of the incoming and enlarged European Commission. In recollecting that phase in Ireland's preparation for entry, Dr Patrick Hillery commented that "(B)y the autumn of 1972 it became clear that the incoming Commission would be a highly political body consisting mainly of prominent political figures from Member States. An authoritative Irish voice in the Commission appeared all the more necessary, with regional development and the Community's plan for economic and monetary union on the agenda."

Dr Hillery was nominated as the Irish member of the thirteen-strong Commission and was named as one of the five Vice-Presidents. Francois-Xavier Ortoli of France was appointed President in succession to Sicco Mansholt. Dr Hillery wrote about his appointment that "we met in January 1973 to discuss the distribution of portfolios. I asked for Social Affairs. The summit meeting on Paris had called on the Commission to develop a social action programme, and it had also been decided at that summit to restructure the social fund. Both of these considerations were in my mind in choosing that portfolio."

The Paris summit, followed so quickly by the first enlargement of the Community, might have gone down in history as the precursor of a great era of growth and unity in Europe. This was not to happen in the immediate future, not least because of the shattering impact of the Yom Kippur War and the Oil Crisis of 1973. Few of the signatories of the Summit Communiqué retained power for long after the event. For example, in Denmark and Ireland, elections saw changes of government in 1973. President Pompidou tragically died in early 1974. Edward Heath and Willy Brandt lost power in the same year. Nonetheless, the Paris Summit laid out an agenda and a programme for the European Communities that continued to challenge national governments and the Community institutions and to excite comment, and criticism, from many quarters.

The Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) is Ireland's leading international affairs think tank. Founded in 1991, its mission is to foster and shape political, policy and public discourse in order to broaden awareness of international and European issues in Ireland and contribute to more informed strategic decisions by political, business and civil society leaders.

The IIEA is independent of government and all political parties and is a not-for profit organisation with charitable status. In January 2021, the Global Go To Think Tank Index ranked the IIEA as Ireland's top think tank.

© Institute of International and European Affairs, October 2022

Creative Commons License

This is a human-readable summary of (and not a substitute for) the license.

[https://creativecommons.org/licenses/Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0))

You are free to:

- Share - copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- Adapt - remix, transform, and build upon the material
- The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.



The IIEA acknowledges the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union



The Institute of International and European Affairs,

8 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

T: +353-1-8746756 F: +353-1-8786880

E: reception@iiea.com W: www.iiea.com