

Europe

Alliance Party Policy Document

**Approved by Party Council:
March 2000**

Alliance
The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

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Europe and the European Union

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1. Introduction

1.1 The European union consists of 15 member states, with a population of 370 million people speaking 11 official languages. In the European Economic Community, politics at European level was initially concerned only with economic issues. But attention later turned to building Europe's social edifice. Equal opportunities for men and women guaranteed pensions, educational opportunities, health care, employee's rights health and safety in the workplace. All of these now form part of the political agenda.

1.2 With this wider political agenda, Alliance should be resolved to the further development and enlargement of the European Union. With a wider union we can look forward to a union that is working effectively towards a more just, prosperous and a safer world community. A Europe that will strive for social justice and economic opportunity world wide, that will work to enhance the global environment. Alliance should further be committed to a Europe that will offer peace, stability and liberty to those threatened by war or oppression.

2. The European Parliament

2.1 Alliance should be committed to working with our partners in ELDR to form a strong cohesive force. A force that will ensure the growth of a pluralistic society and that the voice of Northern Ireland will be heard, ensuring a more effective role within the European Parliament.

3. Building a more dynamic economy

3.1 At a time of global economic instability, the economy of the European Union must combine dynamism with stability. This is why we in Alliance should be championing the single currency, the introduction of which will help to contain inflation, boost investment and reduce costs for business and the consumer. We believe that the independence of the European Central Bank and the role of Stability and Growth Pact in keeping prices stable and budgets disciplined.

Only a strong economy can effectively tackle poverty and unemployment. Economic dynamism is essential for a healthy and participative society, which is itself a cornerstone of a strong

4. Helping employment

- 4.1 Alliance recognises that unemployment is an affront to the dignity of the individual and a costly waste of resources. Alliance therefore welcomes the closer co-ordination by the EU of member states' employment policies.
- 4.2 Employability must be enhanced by a greater and more innovative investment in education, training and life-long learning. Labour mobility in Europe can be eased by developing exchanges of students and apprentices, by intensified language learning and by the full mutual recognition of qualifications. As well as making more portable pension, mortgages and social insurance. The social partners must be engaged in securing stability and moderation in wage settlements.
Small and medium-sized enterprises play a critical part in job creation. Their access to venture capital markets and their freedom to grow must be improved by the removal of unnecessary and burdensome regulation at all levels.

5. Promoting sustainable development

- 5.1 Alliance supports the fight to protect the natural environment in the interests of future generations. We promote an integrated energy supply and environmental protection policy at the level of the European Union. We support economic activity that enhances nature's capacity to restore itself. And, insist that all technological substitutes for raw materials should be safe and clean.
- 5.2 The European Union should concern itself with all cross-border environmental issues including air, water quality, greenhouse gasses, nuclear safety, and waste disposal.
- 5.3 Penalty payments for non-compliance with EU environmental legislation should be applied, while the implementation and control capacity of the European Environment agency should be strengthened.
- 5.4 Alliance supports the agreements signed in Kyoto in 1997 aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions by 8 % for the EU as a whole, and call on member states to stick to their commitment to effect further reductions.

6. Farming and rural development

- 6.1 Alliance supports the need to reform the Common Agricultural policy according the threefold objectives of sustainable development (including public health and animal welfare,) less public intervention and more decentralisation. We should be determined to preserve the EU common policy in which the interests of the producers and consumers, and of urban and rural life, can be balanced. The European single market for farming and fisheries must be preserved.

- 6.2 The reformed CAP must make food production more responsive to demand, thereby making a significant contribution to the liberalisation of world trade.
- 6.3 Alliance should support policies that would be rapidly developed to protect the rural way of life and to enhance the prudent management of the countryside.

7. Budget

- 7.1 Alliance supports the concentration of the social, regional and cohesion funds on those areas of the Union that really need them, and are in favour of a budgetary system that is fair to all member states, progressive in its effect, and transparent and efficient in its implementation.

8. Empowering the citizen

- 8.1 Political parties are also important in encouraging citizens to take an active part in economic, political and social life. A shared sense of community is the foundation of democracy.
- 8.2 Civil liberty and a respect for civic society are at the heart of the European culture. The European Union needs a political system that safeguards these values.
- 8.3 A modern European society will be one in which political self-expression is enhanced and in which men and women have true equality. Alliance fully accepts that Europe's system of governance must fully reflect the growing pluralism of society, the increasing autonomy of the citizen-elect and the rights of minorities to decent representation.
- 8.4 In Europe's information society, equality of access to high quality education and secure freedom of expression must be universal. Alliance insists upon the full application of the principles of open government democracy.

9. Alliance recommendations:

- Alliance supports equal opportunities for men and women in health care, employee's rights health and safety in the workplace
- Alliance should encourage equal and guaranteed pensions and pension rights
- Alliance should be resolved to the further enlargement of the European Union
- Alliance should be committed to working with our partners in ELDR to form a strong cohesive force

- Alliance should be encouraging a more dynamic economy and should therefore be championing the single currency
- Alliance encourages closer co-ordination by the EU member states employment policies
- Alliance supports the agreement of Kyoto in 1997 aimed at reducing Co2 emissions by 8% and should support the fight to protect the natural environment
- Alliance supports the need to reform the Common Agriculture policy and should support policies that would rapidly develop the rural way of life
- Alliance supports the concentration of social, regional and cohesion funds on those areas of the union that need them most
- Alliance encourages every citizen to take an active part in economic and social life, one in which political self-expression is enhanced and in which men and women have true equality.
- Alliance must support and encourage true pluralism within society.