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Mini-summit threatens to undermine EU unity

Commission President Romano Prodi has strongly criticised a "mini-summit" due to be held between France, Germany and Britain ahead of the Ghent summit this afternoon, according to the Financial Times. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder will meet on Friday to discuss the US-led attacks on Afghanistan and the international fight against terrorism.



Commission president Romano Prodi believes that the planned trilateral meeting undermines the desire of the EU to speak with one voice. (Photo: EUobserver.com)

Mr Prodi expressed his disappointment with plans to hold a separate trilateral meeting, and said that it was a "shame" that some countries would be meeting together and others would not be attending. He said that the meeting undermines the desire of the EU to speak with one voice.

News of the trilateral meeting has also angered Italy, which was not invited to attend despite being the fourth largest EU member.

The Guardian suggests that the meeting is evidence of the low profile that the EU has maintained since the 11 September attacks, and there are now fears that the EU "big" are seeking to dictate the Union's agenda at the expense of the "smalls". Brussels is also concerned that the EU's attempts to forge common foreign and security policies have been rendered irrelevant by US-British military action.

British officials sought to play down the row, by insisting that the EU remains united. Mr Blair's official spokesman shrugged off the comments made on Thursday by Mr Prodi. "Europe is speaking with one voice," he said. "There has been a remarkable degree of solidarity." According to the spokesman, the meeting is justified because France, Britain and Germany are the three member states offering military support to the US.

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Written by [Blake Evans-Pritchard](#)

Edited by [Lisbeth Kirk](#)