

OPEN LETTER

to the Editors of newspapers in Member States and candidate countries

In the fifty years since the start of the European Community, Europe has made huge strides. The European Union is now about to receive a welcome new wave of accessions. It is a story of success, but one which now faces twin challenges. The Union's Institutions must become closer to its citizens, under better democratic control, more open and more efficient. The Union also needs to define its role in a fast-changing world.

To consider these key issues, and identify possible responses, the European Council in December 2001 set up a Convention, which was launched on the 28th February, in Brussels. The Convention will conduct its work in public, and we have opened a website (<http://european-convention.eu.int/>) on which your readers will be able to follow our debates and read our papers.

But the process should be two-way : we also want to hear from them. The Convention is concerned to learn how the people of Europe see their Union, and what they want from it. To achieve the best results, we need to draw on the widest possible range of views. We shall organise public hearings, details of which will be published on our website. We have also established a "Forum", to enable representatives of civil society, and interested individuals, to participate in the debate. The Forum has a second website (http://europa.eu.int/futurum/forum_convention/) specifically for the exchange of written contributions. Your readers have an open invitation to join in.

To assist them, and us, we would be grateful if you would publish this letter. In addition, we would greatly appreciate if you would also invite them to contribute on your pages to the public debate on the future of Europe. We would follow what they say with keen interest.

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