

CONV 8/02

COVER NOTE

From : Secretariat
To : Convention
Subject : Follow-up to inaugural session of Convention

For the convenience of the Convention I attach the following documents, relevant to the presentations at the Inaugural Session by the two Vice-Presidents:

- a list of the background documentation, to which Vice-President Amato referred (**Annex I**);
- the note on how the Forum might operate, which Vice-President Dehaene offered to provide (**Annex II**).

John Kerr

LIST OF DOCUMENTS¹

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- European Parliament Resolution of 25.10.2000 on the constitutionalisation of the Treaties
Report A5-0289/2000 – Rapporteur: Olivier Duhamel
- European Parliament Resolution of 31.05.2001 on the Treaty of Nice and the future of the European Union (2001/2022(INI))
Report A5-0168/2001 – Rapporteurs: Iñigo Méndez de Vigo and Antonio Seguro
- European Parliament Resolution of 07.02.2002 on relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments in European integration
Report A5-0023/2002 – Rapporteur: Giorgio Napolitano
- Draft report by Alain Lamassoure on the division of powers between the European Union and the Member States (PE304.276)

COUNCIL

- Consolidated version of the Treaties (Volumes I and II) SN 1845/00 and SN 1846/00

COMMISSION

- Commission Communication on the future of the European Union, *Renewing the Community method*, 5 December 2001, COM(2001) 727 final
(http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/offtext/com051201_en.pdf)

¹ This list is not intended to be comprehensive, but to provide examples of background documents which might be useful for the work of the Convention.

- Commission Communication, *A basic Treaty for the European Union*, 12 July 2000, COM(2000) 434 final
(http://europa.eu.int/archives/igc2000/offdoc/index_en.htm)

Reports by the European University Institute, Florence

(<http://www.iue.it/RSC/Treaties.html>)

- European Parliament, Directorate-General for Research, What constitutional charter for the European Union – Strategies and options for reinforcing the constitutional nature of the Treaties? Working paper, Political Series Poli 105 Fr
- *A basic Treaty for the European Union*, A study of the reorganisation of the Treaties, Report submitted on 15 May 2000 to Mr Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2000
- *Reforming the Treaties' amendment procedures*, Second report on the reorganisation of the European Union Treaties, submitted to the European Commission on 31 July 2000, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2000

Symposia and publications

- Europe 2004 – The Great Debate
(http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/university/post_nice/index_fr.html)
- Friends of Europe, Blueprint for a Debate, Brussels 2001
- CER, Europe 2010: An optimistic vision of the Future, Charles Grant, London 2001
- Notre Europe, la réforme du Conseil des Ministres, Paris 2001.

THE CONVENTION AND THE FORUM

"In order for the debate to be broadly based and involve all citizens, a Forum will be opened for organisations representing civil society (the social partners, the business world, non-governmental organisations academia, etc). It will take the form of a structured network of organisations receiving regular information on the Convention's proceedings. Their contributions will serve as input into the debate. Such organisations may be heard or consulted on specific topics in accordance with arrangements to be established by the Praesidium".

The Laeken Declaration

- 1) It is essential that the work and outcome of the Convention has the full support of the people of Europe. The public should be able not only to follow closely the work of the Convention (which is why its meetings are open and its documents are published), but also to provide input into the Convention's work. For this reason, the Laeken Declaration provides for the opening of a Forum taking the form of a structured network of organisations representing civil society. The Forum is not a single permanent body with a fixed location, but rather multidimensional in nature. It is important that the Forum is able to operate effectively throughout the duration of the Convention, and that the Convention can draw full benefit from the Forum's contributions. To do so, a number of ground-rules are needed.
- 2) The value of the Forum will depend in part on its accessibility. This will entail the establishment of the Forum network in both the existing Member States and the candidate countries. It must also involve different initiatives at different levels. For this reason, all members of the Convention are invited to lend their full support to the Forum. All should be committed to listening, and engaging in an active dialogue with civil society.
- 3) This paper sets out a number of proposals which together could constitute a basis for getting the Forum fully up and running. These proposals cover both the exchange of written information (in both directions) and direct contacts/briefings. In addition, agreement is needed on the organisation of the public hearings which are foreseen in the Laeken declaration, and which will be of particular importance for civil society.

Exchange of written information

- 4) The main instrument for the exchange of written information will be the Internet. The Convention has its own website (<http://european-convention.eu.int/>) which will constitute a resource for anyone wishing to follow the proceedings of the Convention. A separate (but linked) website for the Forum (http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/forum_convention/index_en.htm) will provide the opportunity for civil society to provide input into the Convention's proceedings and to contribute to the wider debate.

- 5) The Forum website (together with the Convention's own website) opened on 28 February. It is managed and resourced by the Commission under the overall supervision of the Praesidium. It has been set up as an open network, with the principal objective being to enable civil society to provide input to the work of the Convention. The sole criterion for registration with the Forum is that each organisation provide a written contribution to the debate. These contributions are then made available to the public and Convention members through publication on the website. The details on how to register and contribute are set out in the attached document from the Commission (and are available on the site itself). The Forum site will also provide the opportunity for organisations to express an interest in participating in public hearings (see below).
- 6) If the written contributions are to be of use to the Convention, they will need to be monitored and analysed. It is intended that the Convention Secretariat will provide a regular overview of contributions to the Praesidium (identifying for example recurrent themes/issues of particular interest), and possibly drawing to the attention of Convention members those which it considers to be of direct use for their work.
- 7) In addition to the facilities provided by the website, it is also envisaged that the President and Vice-President send a letter for publication in all major European newspapers, describing the Convention's mission, tasks and methods. This would help extend the discussions to a wider audience, would provide a useful opportunity to inform readers of the existence of the Forum, and might encourage editors to open up the opportunity of a debate in their respective publications.

Contacts/briefings

- 8) Setting aside the specific issue of public hearings, there will be an expectation of some regular structured contact between the Convention and civil society. At the European level, it probably makes sense for these contacts to be carried out mainly either by the Praesidium or at least selected members of the Praesidium, as well as the President and Vice-Presidents. It is envisaged in particular that Vice-President Dehaene will take specific responsibility in this area. In addition the Economic and Social Committee has already agreed to facilitate contacts at European level. It is important that the Convention and Praesidium are given regular feedback on these contacts.
- 9) It is essential that contacts with civil society at the European level are complemented by debates at national and regional level within both existing Member States and candidate countries. Convention members are encouraged to stimulate such debates and actively participate in them, as well as ensure that feedback is provided to the Convention. Parliamentary representatives have a particular responsibility in this area. It would be useful for members to provide the Praesidium as soon as possible with information on what activities are either underway or envisaged in their countries.
- 10) The effectiveness of all these contacts will depend in part on the ability of civil society to organise itself into contact groups (a good example at the European level is the "social platform" grouping which has already been established precisely for this purpose). This applies not just in Brussels, but also across all Member States and candidate countries.

- 11) In addition, the presence in the Convention of representatives of the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European social partners will be an important factor in promoting the wider flow of information in both directions. These organisations should act as a bridge between the Convention and civil society.

Public Hearings

- 12) The issue of public hearings needs to be treated quite separately from the process of information exchange. Whilst the Forum website will contain some basic information about arrangements for hearings and invite those who might wish to participate to submit a properly documented request, it should be for the Convention/Praesidium to decide when and with whom it wants hearings on the basis of their potential usefulness in taking forward specific aspects of its work.
- 13) Public hearings before the Convention in plenary should not be excluded, but might prove difficult to manage given the numbers. Alternatives could include either holding them in the presence of the Praesidium, or a smaller group designated by the Praesidium, or perhaps later any working groups which might be established. The key to the usefulness of such hearings will be firstly to focus them on specific issues, and secondly to select participants on the basis of how much substantive input they are likely to offer to the Convention's work.

Summary

- 14) In conclusion, the following recommendations are put forward:

A Forum Internet site to serve as the basis of an open network of organisations, with the main objective of allowing for the submission of written contributions as input to the work of the Convention.

A letter to editors for publication in all leading European newspapers, to "advertise" the existence of the Forum, and to encourage them to launch their own debates on the future of Europe.

The establishment of regular and coordinated contacts with civil society (as far as possible through contact groups of organisations), both at the European and national level.

An encouragement to the Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions and social partners to make full use of their role as a bridge between the Convention and civil society.

A structured approach to the organisation of public hearings, in particular through the careful selection of participants depending on the subject matter.

HOW CAN I TAKE PART IN AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORUM?

What form does the Forum take?

What is meant by a "substantive contribution" to the Convention?

How do I get onto the list of Forum participants, and how do I send in a contribution?

What are the language rules for contributions?

To sum up, what must I send in?

What form does the Forum take?

The Forum is made up of European and national organisations which have sent in a substantive contribution for the attention of members of the Convention, putting across their point of view and their ideas on questions relating to the future of the European Union.

NB: Only organisations can be participants. Individuals who wish to take part in, and contribute to, the debate are encouraged to do so via the wide range of civil society organisations which are authorised to participate in the debate, and via the various contributing political, socio-professional, academic and other such organisations. Individual contributions are also welcome for the numerous discussion forums on the Future of Europe on the **national debate** sites and on the **discussion site**; go to the European institutions' **Futurum** site (<http://europa.eu.int/futurum/>)

What is meant by a "substantive contribution" to the Convention?

It means a text which has been drawn up specially for the Convention, which is about the future of the European Union and reform of the treaties, and which deals (not necessarily exclusively) with the subjects and questions addressed in the **Laeken declaration**.
(<http://european-convention.eu.int/pdf/LKNEN.pdf>)

To qualify for publication on the website¹ contributions must be presented and approved by an organisation which is clearly identified, and must be submitted by a named legal representative.

¹ Contributions sent in and published on the Forum website by way of this consultation exercise reflect their authors' views only. The European institutions are in no way liable for the content. In principle, all contributions will be published, subject to the Convention Praesidium's approval, and apart from those which are contrary to public order and etiquette.

University work from individuals, declarations and speeches, regardless of who wrote them, press releases, proceedings of seminars and symposia (unless these are resolutions or conclusions adopted on such occasions by a body which is specifically addressing the Convention or the future Intergovernmental Conference) which cannot be regarded as a contribution as defined above, may still be published on the **Futurum** website (<http://europa.eu.int/futurum/>) with a view to giving citizens access to information on the debate on the future of Europe.

How do I get onto the list of Forum participants, and how do I send in a contribution?

To be entered on the list of participants and be able to contribute to the Forum, organisations must submit the following three documents to the Forum's e-mail address:

sg-forum-convention@cec.eu.int

- a **fact sheet** on the authoring organisation, which will be used for the list of participants and to facilitate subsequent contacts between the Convention secretariat and the Forum participants. Each organisation is requested to state which of the four categories it wishes to be entered in:
 - political interests (including sub-national public authorities, e.g. regions, towns and cities and any organisations representing them),
 - socio-economic interests (including the social partners, professional groupings etc.),
 - academic interests and think-tanks,
 - other civil society organisations, NGOs, schools of thought etc.
- **the text of the contribution for the attention of the members of the Convention.**
- a **summary** of the contribution, of no more than 3000 characters (excluding spaces). Obviously, a summary will not be needed if the contribution itself is no more than 3 000 characters.

NB: Although it is strictly possible to submit these details by post or fax to the Convention secretariat, only texts submitted in electronic form (recommended format: Word) will be used, published and circulated under the auspices of the Forum.

What are the language rules for contributions?

Contributions may be sent submitted in any number of language versions, all of which will be published on the website.

To sum up, what must I send in? sg-forum-convention@cec.eu.int

- The text of the contribution itself, in the original language, and in any other language versions available.
 - A summary (of 3 000 characters at most, excluding spaces) in the original language and in any other language versions available.
 - The fact sheet, duly completed.
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