

COVER NOTE

from : Secretariat

to : Convention

Subject: **Report on National Debate on the future of Europe:
– Cyprus**

Members of the Convention will find attached the report on the national debate on the future of Europe taking place in Cyprus.



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

**Contribution by the delegation of the Republic of Cyprus
to the European Convention on the Future of Europe**

**Summary of the national debate with the civil society
on the Future of Europe**

Plenary Session of the Convention

Brussels, 24 - 25 June 2002

House of Representatives

The Committee on European Affairs of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus has been entrusted with the task of organizing the debate on the future of Europe at national level. To this end, the Committee has adopted the following programme:

A. Organization of a series of debates on the future of Europe with the participation of the civil society

1. Ceremonial debate of the plenary on the future of Europe - 28 February 2002

Speakers:

- H.E. the President of the House of Representatives Mr. Demetris Christofias
- The Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos

2. First thematic debate on the future of Europe – 5 April 2002

Topics:

(a).....The role of national parliaments in the future Europe

The participants underlined that the creation of the future Europe presupposes that citizens be informed of and involved in European matters. This involvement can be both direct and indirect through national parliaments, these being the most representative institutions in the national systems of governance and, by definition, expressing the will of people. Therefore, the enhancement of the role of national parliaments is one of the constituent elements in the effort towards involving citizens in European developments, reducing the democratic deficit and enhancing legitimacy and transparency in the Union's system of governance and decision-making. The basic question the participants dwelled upon was the search of practical measures which could contribute towards enhancing the role of national parliaments in the future Europe.

(b).....The cultural dimension of the future Europe

In the course of the debate, concerns were expressed as to whether a European identity can or cannot abolish national identities. The importance of self-awareness of each nation was stressed. The issue was raised regarding the attribution of a more fluid and multi-dimensional meaning to the concept. The introduction of educational cultural programmes and programmes developing inter-cultural communication was considered to be particularly important. The discussion also focused on the importance of forming models of coexistence and finding ways of more substantive inclusion and protection of minorities in member states and candidate countries.

(c).....The institutions of the European Union, their relations and competences in the future Europe

The participants agreed that any institutional reform in the EU should reflect the European citizens' vision. They pointed out that outside its borders, the EU faces the challenge to prove capable of developing and exercising its CFSP. So far, they are not convinced by what is done for setting up the necessary infrastructure. Inside its borders, there is an absolute demand for more democratic legitimacy. Finally, they concluded that the particular interests of the small states are better served by way of promoting the community interests, whilst they acknowledged that the process of transferring more sovereign rights from the member states to the European institutions will be a gradual one and it will be the result of a political give-and-take.

3. Second thematic debate on the future of Europe – 24 April 2002

Topic: The youth and the future Europe

In addition to the subjects that usually preoccupy youth (education, unemployment, xenophobia etc.), participants engaged in matters of wider European interest such as the nature and character of the EU, the need for democratic deepening and the social role of the Union. The participants

expressed their wish for continuing and enhancing the dialogue with organized youth groups at national level. The House of Representatives, acknowledging that this debate was an initial probe into the problems faced by youth, committed itself to a wider and more extensive debate on the issues raised. This second debate will take place after the conclusion of the Youth Convention in July.

4. Third thematic debate on the future of Europe – 15 May 2002

Topic: The local authorities (principle of subsidiarity)

Considering that the subsidiarity principle presupposes a clear delimitation of competences between the European Union and the member states, on the basis of the question “in which level of governance would an action be better performed”, and considering that on the basis of the principle of proximity, the allocation of competences is to be made in such a way that they can yield in terms of real “closeness to the citizens”, the discussion focused on the role that local government could or should play to the implementation of the above principles.

5. Fourth thematic debate on the future of Europe – 25 June 2002 (in progress)

Topic: The fundamental rights of the citizens in the future Europe

B. Establishment of a mechanism for the dissemination of information

Further to the public meetings, the Committee decided to set up within the Parliament a mechanism for the continuous communication with and dissemination of information to the public on European Union issues based on the practice followed by national parliaments of other member states or candidate countries.

In this respect, the Committee decided to pursue the following:

1. Utilization of the existing website of the House of Representatives.
 - Creation of links to various websites of the European Union.
 - Creation of a special forum to promote dialogue with the public on European issues and especially on the future of Europe.
 - Creation of a section for Frequently Asked Questions, where questions and answers on main issues concerning the European Union and its relations with Cyprus will be posted.
2. Development of an informative newsletter concerning Europe and its future, including the latest developments, which will also be posted on the World Wide Web.
3. Creation of an Information Centre (Infocenter) on the premises of the House of Representatives where material on the European Union will be freely available to the public.
4. Proper dissemination of information to the mass media.
5. Compiling of articles on European Union issues by officers of the House.
6. Celebration of Europe Day by the House of Representatives.
7. Participation of the President of the House and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of European Affairs in televised public debates and/or radio broadcasts with the objective of promoting a human and a personal contact with the citizens.

C. Others

The House of Representatives organized a debate on the future of Europe with the participation of the civil society, with H.E. the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Pat Cox, as the main speaker.

A. The University of Cyprus

The University and particularly the Jean Monnet Chair programmed a series of lectures titled “National Debate on the Future of Europe”, with the participation of representatives of the civil society. The first lecture took place on the 3rd of April 2002. Co-organizers were the University of

Cyprus and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

European Institute of Cyprus (EIC)

The EIC organized:

- a. A discussion on the Future of Europe in the Adults Education Services, November 2001.
- b. A series of discussions among the secondary school staff on the future of Europe, May 2002.
- c. A two-day seminar on the Future of Europe, June 2002.
- d. Five different discussion panels on the “Future of Europe” broadcasted by the National TV Channel.
- e. A one-week Summer School offered to young graduates on the “Future of Europe” is programmed in September 2002.

B. Other Activities

In October 2001, the Cyprus Confederation of Employers and Industrialists organized a discussion on the Future of Europe, with H.E. the President of the European Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi, as the main speaker.

In September 2001, the European Movement of Cyprus organized a public discussion on Enlargement and the Future of Europe, with the participation of Mr. Leopold Maurer, Head of the Cyprus Team at DG Enlargement of the European Commission.

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