

**COVER NOTE**

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from : Secretariat

to : Convention

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

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

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**Summary of the Hungarian National Debate on the Future of Europe**

***Contribution to the Convention Session on Civil Society***

*Brussels, 24-25 June, 2002*

***Presented by Mr. Pál Vastagh, member of the Convention***

The launch of the Debate on the Future of Europe in Spring 2001 marked the increasingly pro-active attitude of European Union institutions to find effective ways of more direct communication and contact with its citizens. Public debate is an important instrument of democracies. The involvement of candidate countries in the debate has had a double effect: it has extended the vision of the debate and brought new ideas and perspectives.

This document sums up the most important points of the "Future of Europe" debate in Hungary on the national level since its launch with particular emphasis on the involvement of citizens and civil organisations.

A great variety of programmes have been organised in Hungary since the launch of the debate in Hungary in June 2001. The key state institutions responsible for the advancement of the debate have been:

- The Hungarian National Assembly and its Committee on European Integration Affairs;
- The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*5 June, 2001*

Launch of the Debate in Hungary

“Common Future of the EU and Hungary” conference in the building of the Hungarian Parliament, initiated by Dr Ferenc Mádl, President of the Republic of Hungary, served as the official launch of the Debate on the Future of Europe, where representatives of parliamentary parties, academia, trade unions, NGOs and churches participated. President Mádl also launched the national homepage on the Future of Europe.

*Civil Society Involvement*

Hungarian civil organisations have already organised several events to contribute to the Debate on the Future of Europe. The main objective of these fora has been to seek the opinion of citizens.

*15 November, 2001*

NGO conference on the Future of Europe

The "Europe House" in Budapest organised with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office a national NGO conference entitled "Citizens for the future Europe".

*25 March, 2002*

Position Paper on EU Governance

After broad discussions a position paper of Hungarian civil organisations was released commenting the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance. It emphasised the important role of civil society actors in achieving good governance practices. The position paper was endorsed by 84 Hungarian NGOs and is available online on the website of the EU.

*23 April, 2002*

A National Response: Hungarian Civil Forum for European Integration

A recent development is the establishment of the "Hungarian Civil Forum for European Integration", a network of Hungarian NGOs with the (primary) purpose to co-ordinate their EU-related efforts. To date nearly 100 Hungarian civil society organisations have joined the network. It intends to serve as an open national forum following the recommendation of the Convention. It brings together views of various sectors of society including academia, social partners and others. It has already established close contacts with the Hungarian members of the Convention.

The national work of the Forum is helped by "Civil Europe" a fortnightly newsletter on civil society and European integration published in Hungarian and distributed electronically throughout the NGO sector in Hungary. It is a very useful instrument in promoting the Debate on the Future of Europe.

*9 May, 2002*

Europe Day

Europe Day was widely celebrated with varied programmes in different locations in Hungary including a central event in downtown Budapest, where a special "Europe Square" was created for the day with various presentations, cultural entertainment and games.

On the same day the "Europe Car" project was launched initiated by the European Information Point in the city of Szeged. During the year the "Europe Car" visits events and programmes all over Hungary in order to distribute information on the European Union and promote the debate about the future of Europe.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Europe Day in Hungary took place in the city of Keszthely, by Lake Balaton on 7 June, 2002.

On the Europe Day Mr. József Szájer, member of the Convention launched a homepage entitled "eukonvent.hu", which intends to accelerate the involvement of the civil society in the debate on the future of Europe.

A. Plans for the Future

*July 2002*

Hungarian NGO Office in Brussels

Recognising the importance of permanent presence in Brussels a new stage in Hungarian NGO - EU relations will be the setting up of a Hungarian Civil Office in Brussels in the near future.

*27-29 September, 2002*

"CIVILIÁDA 2002"

In line with the strong European focus of civil society in Hungary today "CIVILIÁDA 2002", the annual forum of Hungarian civil organisations will be organised in Budapest with the main theme on EU integration under the slogan "From Dream to Reality".

*15-16 November, 2002*

Convention Forum in Budapest

A meeting of the Convention Forum is proposed to be held in Budapest, in form of an international conference, with the participation of Convention members.

Budapest, 13 June, 2002

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