

**REPORT TO THE CONVENTION ABOUT THE NATIONAL DEBATE TAKING PLACE
IN TURKEY ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

In line with the goals of the Convention, our government had initiated a debate on the future of Europe.

On 11 January and 19 February 2002 two meetings were organised with the participation of various civil society organisations, academics and representatives of media. The main objective of these meetings were to explain to the representatives of the different layers of the Turkish civil society the objectives of the convention as well as to listen to their views and positions on issues that would be discussed during the deliberations of the convention. The meetings proved useful in obtaining the first feedback on the opinions of the civil society for the future of the European Union.

In order to maintain continuity in dialogue with the civil society, a Coordination Committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established. The Committee has been given among others the responsibility of maintaining and improving the dialogue with the various organisations of the civil society. Hence it has become an important channel of communication and information between the civil society and the Government.

Another initiative to this end was launching a discussion forum on the server of the General Secretariat responsible for EU affairs. It has been observed that since its initiation in the early days of March 2002, there has been a growing interest in the discussion, and representatives of civil society as well as individual citizens have regularly been posting their opinions and views. The discussion forum called “EU-Turkey Portal” has been inviting civil society organisations as well as individual citizens to become members of the Portal. By filling out an application form, they can specify their areas of interest ranging from free movement of goods and services, common agricultural policy to policies of EU on education, culture etc. so that they could be regularly posted information on these issues and also they could via the same platform contribute to the national debate on the future of Europe taking place in Turkey.

Activities aimed at including Turkish civil society in the debate on the future of Europe were not solely confined to government initiatives. Turkish civil society organisations on their part instigated different forms of activities.

Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation organised two meetings on 11 February and 5 March 2002. Following these meetings, participants decided to transform these activities into a civil initiative aimed at obtaining concrete results. They have set forth three main objectives; to inform the Turkish society, to report the opinions of the members of the convention and last but not least to determine Turkish civil initiative’s stance. To this end, a platform under the name of “Europe’s Future-Turkey Group” has been established under the coordination of the “economic development foundation” with the active participation of representatives from 22 universities, 17 NGO’s, 8 media organisations and individual EU experts.

The platform established three working groups to work on the topics of the Convention, namely forming a European constitution, attainment of democracy, efficiency and transparency within institutional reform and allocation of competences, and the role of the European Union on world stage. The groups concluded their discussions and submitted through the forum its contribution to the discussion on the future of Europe.

At this stage of the ongoing debate following views and considerations have gained ground:

- The EU founding treaties should be incorporated into a European constitution
- The charter of fundamental rights should be incorporated into the treaties by rendering the charter legally binding.
- The successful implementation of EU policies is possible through public support and the development of a new method that will allow the establishment of political legitimacy and the highest participation possible
- To this end, the competences of the European Parliament should be increased and its effective participation in the decision-making procedures should be ensured but this increase should not damage the institutional balances
- Attainment of the contribution of national parliaments to the EU decision making procedures will play a crucial role in strengthening the union's democratic legitimacy.
- With regard to increase of competence, the execution of a more simplified co-decision procedure in more areas is the most appropriate method.
- Community method should be preserved
- The responsibility of implementing all Council/Parliament decisions that are of legislative in nature should be left to the commission under the efficient scrutiny of the parliament and the council.
- Each member state must absolutely be represented in the Commission.
- Essential future of the council should not be changed; however the complex structure in decision-making process should be simplified.
- The principle of solidarity should be interpreted in a way to include, along with the existent members the candidate countries also in every area.
- In order to reduce the problems accompanying globalisation, and to intensify social welfare and solidarity, the social function of the EU must be reinforced.
- The new understanding of security should be defined in a way that it should not be limited to only defence and military dimensions but should also include economic, social and human dimensions.

Turkish Government's efforts to maintain an effective dialogue with the civil society will continue throughout the deliberations of this convention
