

**CONFERENCE
OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE GOVERNMENTS
OF THE MEMBER STATES**

Brussels, 11 October 2007

CIG 13/07

COVER NOTE

from: Presidency of the IGC

to: Delegations

Subject: **IGC 2007**

Letter from the European Economic and Social Committee, dated 3 October 2007

Attached will be found the letter from the European Economic and Social Committee.



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

Brussels, 3 October 2007
DAG/SCO (07)D/

Mr José Sócrates
Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

Dear Prime Minister,

The European Economic and Social Committee fully supports the efforts of the Council Presidency to secure agreement on the Reform Treaty by the European Council on 18 and 19 October, based on the mandate adopted on 23 June.

In my letter of 1 June 2007 sent to the presidents of the three main European institutions, I have already taken the opportunity to express my satisfaction on behalf of the Committee that the draft Reform Treaty preserves the substance of the Constitutional Treaty and in particular that the provisions on the democratic life of the European Union, including those on participatory democracy, have been retained.

While acknowledging that the intergovernmental method of revising treaties is the only possible legitimate approach to reaching swift agreement, the Committee nevertheless feels that this is very much less satisfactory in terms of democratic participation and involvement of citizens than the conventional path. Besides, the fact that the substance of the Constitutional Treaty has been preserved shows that the Convention has proved its worth and represents a model for future reform of the Treaties.

In this context, the European Economic and Social Committee held a conference on *Organised civil society has its say on the future of Europe* on 27-28 September in Brussels, in order to establish a platform for the democratic participation and involvement of citizens. It thanks the Council Presidency, as well as the Commission, for their contribution in this conference via the presence of their representatives.

One of the debates' conclusions is the suggestion by the participants to **provide structures and a legal framework for the accomplishment of participatory democracy.**

.../...

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The EESC is eager to take part in this complex process in a pro-active way, thanks to its permanent connection and dialogue with national and European civil society intermediary bodies. The EESC therefore asks **to include such a role in one of the final declarations of the Intergovernmental Conference**, likewise to what has been done in the framework of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

Participants in the Conference also stressed the fact that citizens feel **distant from the European institutions and not sufficiently informed** about the European integration process: the European jargon, the complexity of the Treaties, the information provided by national governments and the press present the European Union under a negative and unclear light.

Concerning the relations with the national press, on 12 November the Committee will hold on a seminar on *Communicating Europe: What role does civil society wish to play?* gathering together spokespersons and press officers of Economic and Social Councils, organisations of EESC members, EU institutions and Permanent Representations of 27 EU Member States as well as representatives of media organisations and editors of publications issued by European and national civil society organisations. One of the aims of the seminar is to create a platform for communication for better communication and more effective cooperation with European civil society organisations.

In this framework, **the Committee is ready to receive the mandate to continue playing such an active role on a higher scale and with improved means of action, in cooperation with all European institutions.**

Other, more general conclusions of the conference were:

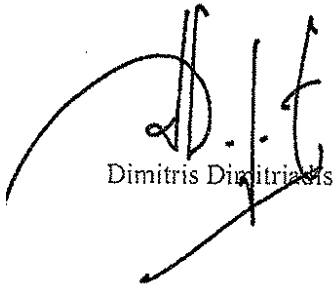
- A critical but positive analysis of the draft Reform Treaty
- The danger and the risk of becoming further away from the citizens
- The desire of participation and the wish of a greater clarity and transparency regarding the global European project
- The real necessity and urgency of publicising the Treaty text
- A clarification of the channels of consultation that are used
- The need to strengthen ties with the national Economic and Social Councils
- An intensification of the dialogue and communication with citizens and between the European institutions
- A follow-up of the ratification process.

.../...

I take this opportunity of submitting some **concrete proposals** for Your (and the other members of the Intergovernmental Conference) consideration in the frame of the ongoing negotiations of the Conference which I have listed in an annex to this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours faithfully,



Dimitris Dimitriadis

Copies to:

- The Members of the European Council
- The President of the European Parliament and Members of the European Parliament participating in the IGC
- The President of the European Commission
- The President of the Committee of the Regions

ANNEX

To the letter addressed by President DIMITRIADIS to Mr José SOCRATES, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, regarding the Intergovernmental Conference

- I. Let me first of all emphasise that the consultative bodies, i.e. the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are important instruments for strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European Union and contribute to rational ownership of the European venture by ordinary citizens. I therefore fully support the request submitted to you by the President of the Committee of the Regions, Michel Delebarre, on 28 August, for the **insertion into the Treaty on European Union of a provision acknowledging the status and role of these consultative bodies in the institutional architecture of the EU** of which they form an integral part.
- II. In this connection, I would also like to stress that the two consultative bodies should be treated on an equal footing and enjoy the same rights as are conferred by their prerogatives. Two different dimensions - organised civil society and local and regional authorities - are represented by the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; however both of these are of equal importance in terms of European reality and the democratic life of the Union. I would therefore like to draw your attention to a provision of the draft Reform Treaty of 23 July which, if not amended, could contradict the principle of equal treatment of the two consultative bodies. The **amendment to Article 230(3) of the Treaty establishing the European Community** gives the Committee of the Regions the right to institute proceedings at the Court of Justice in order to defend its prerogatives. For the same reasons, I feel it would be legitimate to include the European Economic and Social Committee in the above provision.
- III. Likewise, given that the protocol on the application of the subsidiarity principle will be retained in the Reform Treaty, I have the honour and the duty to ask you, on behalf of the European and Economic and Social Committee to give our Committee a **similar right to institute proceedings to that which has been granted to the Committee of the Regions in Article 8 (2) of the protocol**. This right would not necessarily apply to the subsidiarity principle, which is of particular interest to the Committee of the Regions, but could for example cover aspects of citizens' fundamental rights and the social clauses of the Treaty.
- IV. Finally, I would like to submit the suggestion to **associate the European Economic and Social Committee pro-actively in the evaluation of the impact of Community legislation** and to include such a role in one of the final declarations of the Intergovernmental Conference.