

**BULLETIN 24**  
**Brussels, 26 March 2004**

**IGC to finish no later than June Summit / European Council**

Meeting since yesterday March 25 for the Spring Summit in Brussels, the Heads of State have finally agreed to move on the Constitution. During lunch yesterday evening, they made a **commitment to finalize discussions on the text by no later than the June Summit**. After the announcements during the last days this decision was to be expected. After the new Spanish government's leader Zapatero had sent out strong signals that Spain would accept compromise in the voting system in the Council, Polish Prime Minister Miller announced after a meeting with the German Chancellor Schröder that he would give up his tough stance on the issue as well – Poland did not want to stand alone in the corner blocking the Constitution. Additionally, the UK has signaled some flexibility on some of its red-line issues such as the move from unanimity to QMV in judicial cooperation. However, areas as taxation, social security and foreign policy seem still to be contentious in this regard (according to a report in the Financial Times). Sadly enough, it seems to have been the horrific terrorist attacks in Madrid that made some movement possible on the Constitution, but many of us will want to watch the new anti-terrorism packages carefully in terms of fundamental human rights, asylum and data protection etc.

The Irish Taoiseach Ahern has presented his report based on the conversations he's had during the last weeks with European leaders. This report is available on [the Irish Presidency's website](#). In short, Ahern points out that he feels a strong desire of European leaders to finalize discussions soon – but that compromise on several issues still might be difficult. *"The IGC must proceed on the basis that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Nevertheless, the Presidency was able to confirm that the great bulk of the provisions of the Draft Constitutional Treaty prepared by the Convention are not in dispute."* The Irish believe that this agreement is achievable if the necessary political will exists. Ahern points to the Convention draft and the December Summit proposals of the Italian presidency as basis for agreement (documents CIG 60 ADD1 and ADD2, see [Italian Presidency's official website](#) or [www.act4europe.org](http://www.act4europe.org)). This means that potentially some of the gains we have made (such as e.g. gender equality in art.2 and the horizontal social clause) are not as much under threat as we feared, but that on the other hand last minute worrying compromise in Justice and Home Affairs (back door re-introduction of unanimity, less cooperation in criminal matters etc.) and in relation to the Foreign Minister are on the table and we need action (please refer to CONCORD's recent actions under sectors [www.act4europe.org](http://www.act4europe.org)).

**Campaigning on the Constitution is, thus, on the agenda again!** We have time until June latest in order to let decision makers know **where our red lines are** in either direction. It is still difficult to know on what points the Heads of State will discuss and which are seen as agreed. We have given you idea on the issues still on the agenda following a meeting with the Irish Permanent Representative Anderson in bulletin 22. We will seek to find out more detail on timing and issues as soon as possible from the side of the IGC and will also communicate the news from the sectors' on their specific analysis.

All the best for your campaigns in the meantime!

Markus Held  
Policy Assistant

Nicolas J. Beger  
Coordinator