

## **BULLETIN 26** **Brussels, 27 April 2004**

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### **NEWS ON IGC<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Timetable on IGC now clearer: Ministerial meeting on May 17 and 18**

The Irish Foreign Affairs minister Cowen presented the timetable of the presidency on the re-opening of the IGC. **There will be a meeting at ministerial level on 17 and 18 May** in a backdrop to the General Affairs Council that will be prepared by a "contact group" expectedly on 4 May. **If needed, other IGC meetings could take place on 24 May and 14 June.** The Irish presidency wants to obtain a realistic package for the June summit, which would only leave two or three questions pending. You might want to write to the Foreign Affairs ministers at this final stage in order to remind them a last time of your claims and concerns. As soon as we know

<sup>1</sup> Information mostly from Agence Europe, EU observer, euractive and official European Union information websites.

who is in the above-mentioned Contact Group, we will let you know. It might be interesting to address them.

The issues to be discussed are obviously institutional questions, the ways for calculating qualified majority voting and its scope as well as "issues raised by some delegations on the post-Naples package" (remind: CIG 60/03 with its addenda; for more information refer to the [IGC's official website](#)) and aspects of this package which have to be confirmed. This leaves us once again with mere speculations about what is still to be campaigned on. It is interesting to note, however, that the former Commissioner **Barnier, who is now French Foreign minister, called for improvements on the social dimension of Europe: Institutionalisation of the social summit; the introduction of the clause on social dialogue proposed by Italy; QMV for social benefits and migrant workers; QMV for public health.**

It is still very difficult to know what the different Member States want exactly to be approved or not. The Netherlands spoke out very clearly for unanimity on the financial perspectives and for the Constitution to be agreed on before the European elections.

### **British Referendum on Constitution announced**

Blair announced **British referendum on Constitution**. It is predicted that the referendum would take place in mid to late 2005 after National elections and that voters would simply decide by a 'yes' or 'no' vote whether the UK should adopt the Constitution or not. Blair hinted that a 'no' vote at the referendum could entail re-negotiation of the Constitutional Treaty and a second referendum. Considered as a 'U-turn' in Blair's stance towards the ratification of a final text, this announcement has provoked a debate throughout Europe on reasons and consequences of this decision. Firstly, this is deemed to increase pressure on other countries, including France, to move towards referenda, too. (n.b. **Ireland, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Luxemburg, Netherlands** and the **Czech Republic** are already likely to hold such plebiscites). Secondly, a failure would most certainly put into question UK's membership to the EU as such. European Parliament's President Pat Cox very much welcomed this decision stating that this would urge British politicians and citizens to "*reflect on realities and not just on myths. They will be obliged to look at interests and not just emotional populist arguments. It will be a tough debate but a winnable one.*" Last opinion polls confirm that the British are still very much sceptical to EU's integration – the referendum might therefore be a good opportunity to raise awareness amongst them about the realities of European policy. **And civil society will have a major role in promoting a "citizens talk to citizens" approach: beyond government's sometimes limited capacity or willingness to inform citizens on issues that really impact on their day-to-day life.**

### **European Parliament to discuss Constitution in its plenary session on 4 May 2004**

Following the initiative of MEPs Cornillet (F), Frassoni (It), Leinen (D), Segni (It) and Wallis (UK), 150 MEPs have signed an appeal calling for a debate during the plenary session next May on the European Constitution. They have invited the Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern to this debate and call on the European Council to take into account the situation of discussion on the Constitution. They are likely to call for an

agreement before European elections on June 10 to 13 (and additionally on a symbolic signing of the Constitution in Madrid in order to pay tribute to the victims of the terrorist attacks of March 11) on the basis of the draft treaty proposed by the Convention.

## **Friends of Europe publish suggestions to break deadlock**

Friends of Europe have published a report containing statements of major politicians throughout Europe including Giuliano Amato, Enrique Baron, Michel Barnier and Elmar Brok on possible ways of compromise breaking the deadlock on the Constitution. They deal with the questions of "*How long and how well can we muddle through without a Constitutional Treaty?*", "*What are the strategic implications of the constitutional impasse?*" and "*Will the need for survival tactics eclipse the drive for EU reform?*". Please find more information on [www.friendsofeurope.org](http://www.friendsofeurope.org).

## **The act4europe campaign**

### **EP elections toolkit updates**

The act4europe toolkit around the EP elections is now available in French, Spanish, German and Estonian - thanks to the support of many NGOs subscribing to our list (you find their names in the respective translations).

Furthermore, we would like to draw your attention to a report published by Simon Hix (LSE, London) and Michael Marsh (Dublin) who give estimations about the probable outcome of the European elections. It might be useful for you to get an idea about which parties of your country are likely to be represented at the next EP and how many candidates (more or less) they will have. Obviously, these predictions are to be used with caution but they can give hints and help not to waste energy in your campaigns. Find the report by clicking on the link:

[http://www.bmbrussels.be/files/news\\_4.pdf](http://www.bmbrussels.be/files/news_4.pdf)

Different European parties are having their congresses these days and weeks. **We will continue including links to their EP elections manifesto in the toolkit** as far as they have not been included yet.

### **Campaign against Article 51 of the EU Constitution**

The NGO coalition against article 51 (special civil dialogue for churches and non-religious organisations) is getting active again. Those wanting to take action against Article 51, can consider signing an appeal during these last weeks of constitutional debate.

The appeal has been launched by MEP Maurizio Turco (Italy, Radical - Emma Bonino list) for the withdrawal of Article 51. Mr Turco has already received support from MEPs and national parliamentarians and is now gathering support from ASSOCIATIONS/NGOs in the 15 EU Member States as well as the 10 Accession countries. This appeal has to be signed by the representative of the ASSOCIATION/NGO (Executive Director/President) on behalf of the ASSOCIATION/NGO.

Sign by clicking on the link below (Info available in FRENCH, ITALIAN, and SPANISH):

<http://www.radicalparty.org/art51/form.php>

The NGO coalition against article 51 is asking you to forward this message to other organisations (please bear in mind that organisations' signatures are requested and not individual) in your country and to MPs who would be interested to sign this appeal (see list of MPs who have already signed the appeal online).

For further information, please contact Salima Chitalia:  
IPPF European Network  
Tel: +32 2 250 09 50/66

### **The ECAS Enlargement Report**

ECAS set up a hotline to monitor direct consequences for citizens and workers in the New Member States regarding their free movement. You may want to contribute with your experiences or those of your members / constituencies or find it interesting to contact them for further information on this issue. Please find a link further down.

"Enlargement to EU 25 ought to mean that people from the new Member States will be welcomed as first class European citizens. After enlargement, new European citizens should be free to move anywhere around the Union as those of the current Member States. But will this be the case? ECAS is hotting up its report to find out. ECAS is re-launching its hotline to gather evidence about what actually happens after 1 May. Collecting information about problems and positive experiences encountered by EU citizens will provide the necessary evidence to 'photograph' what happens as a result of enlargement in the area of free movement of people. We aim to achieve this by developing information, much of which is not yet publicly available and through networking with other NGO's and citizens information and advice services. To find out more please visit our website at [www.ecas.org](http://www.ecas.org) or on the [direct link](#)."

### **Media Project KALEIDOSCOPE around EP elections in June**

*Kaleidoscope* is a project of the Audiovisual Division of the European Parliament filming events related to the European Elections in every one of the 25 member states. They will provide footage from all over Europe and broadcast the items on Europe by Satellite, EbS, offering journalists a wide range of story material and images from all over the existing and new member states of the EU related to the events, peoples and places in the lead up to the European elections. As examples of their planned activities they name the Youth Forum of the youngest political candidates from each country. They will have footage of the youngest candidates elected breaking through a symbolic wall erected for the entry of the youngest MEPs into the European parliament. Coverage of "mock-elections", a great event organised by students in Scotland. etc...

They contacted the act4europe office and let us know that they are very interested in having NGO events around the Parliament elections included in their programme. So

if you are interested in receiving footage or if you know of interesting events, people and places that they can cover, just get in contact with them. They can also help you to get other footage, material or stories that you are interested in.

**Call or email the Kaleidoscope Project Team : [kaleidoscope@europarl.eu.int](mailto:kaleidoscope@europarl.eu.int)**

Projectmanager: Andréa Vermeer (00-32-2-2843714) or mobile (0479-556618)  
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## **The Civil Society Contact Group**

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### **New Member as observer of the Civil Society Contact Group**

In its last meeting, the Contact Group responded positively on a membership request for observer status by the **Cultural Platform "European Forum for the Arts and Heritage", EFAH**. EFAH currently counts over 65 member organisations. Members are independent organisations, either pan European in constitution, or working on European issues relevant to the cultural sector. EFAH does not represent individual members views, but aims to pool members' expertise in order to build a stronger advocacy platform for the cultural sector. In that sense, EFAH seeks to strengthen its members through information and dialogue, and contribute as a facilitator for the members' own representation at EU level as necessary. A part of EFAH's mandate is to assess the ways in which culture should find expression in other policy fields; based on the belief that cultural policy has to be an integrated part of other policy formation. Issues of cultural policy intersect with values (e.g. freedom of expression) and issues (e.g. women's access to active participation in the field of art) of all 5 NGO sectors in the Civil Society Contact Group. Since EFAH cannot be a member of any of the sectors present, it sees in a membership in the Civil Society Contact Group the most appropriate forum for the cultural sector to be informed about policy issues and concerns in other key NGO sectors that should be taken into account when forming EFAH's own policy recommendations.

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