

BULLETIN 48

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1. EDITORIAL

Dear act4europe friends,

The EU constitutional treaty will not come into force as it was proposed. After the rejection in France and the Netherlands two years ago and the period of reflection, EU leaders at the end of June agreed on how to move forward. And Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) will be launched on July 23 by the Portuguese presidency. This body will bring together representatives of the member states, the Commission and to a lesser degree the European Parliament in order to renegotiate a new treaty for the EU. The June Council agreed on a very specific mandate only leaving little room for negotiation during the IGC.

Different aspects of the European Transparency Initiative (ETI) are actually being implemented: The Civil Society Contact Group took part in the consultation on access to documents and was invited to a meeting with the Secretariat General of the European Commission to discuss the code of conduct for interest representatives. In cooperation with ALTER-EU, the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation, the Civil Society Contact Group organised an information and discussion meeting for Brussels based NGOs on the ETI. And last but not least the Civil Society Contact Group called for the upcoming IGC to be transparent and accessible.

As you can see, the last weeks were very busy. Now it is time to wish you a nice summer and a relaxing holiday for all of you!

Regula Heggli
Coordinator

2. CIVIL SOCIETY CONTACT GROUP

Call for an open and transparent Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)

The Civil Society Contact Group at the beginning of June sent a call for an effective treaty and a transparent and accessible Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) to all 27 EU heads of state and government. The Civil Society Contact Group urged EU leaders to ensure that the following points will be included in the new treaty for the EU:

- Charter of Fundamental Rights
- Key components of part III of the draft Constitution including policies on environment (III-233), the new energy chapter (III-256), the horizontal social clauses (article III 116,117,118,122) as well as the strengthening of Europe's development policy (III 316,317,318,319) and its ability to play a responsible role in world (III-292) need to be retained in a new treaty.
- The principle of participatory democracy (I-47)
- The extension of qualified majority voting

The call also challenged the Council to open up the inter-governmental approach. A coherent and effective strategy of involving civil society is urgently needed to engage European citizens in the process and inform its outcomes.

Find the entire call in [English](#), [French](#) and [Italian](#) here. Thanks go to ISCOS Brussels office and Amnesty International France for the translation!

This week the Civil Society Contact Group sent a letter to the Portuguese presidency reiterating its call for an open and transparent IGC and asking for the first consolidated draft of the new treaty to be made public as soon as possible.

You can read the [letter](#) here.

Briefing on mandate for Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) to negotiate a new treaty for the EU

The heads of state and government at the Council meeting at end of June agreed the mandate for an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), the body that will negotiate the changes to the draft of the constitutional treaty for it to become the Reform treaty.

Find more information about the mandate in chapter 3 below. Find a [briefing on the IGC](#) here.

Contribution to consultation on "Access to documents"

On April 18 2007 the Commission launched a [green paper](#) that initiated the review of the regulation on public access to documents held by institutions of the European Community. The green paper forms part of the European transparency initiative (ETI). It opened a consultation period that lasts until the end of July 2007.

Find a [briefing on the green paper](#) here.

Find the Civil Society Contact Group response to the consultation [here](#).

Workshop: Taking stock of the European Transparency Initiative- Current debate and future challenges

ALTER-EU, the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation, and the Civil Society Contact Group on July 12 organized a workshop on the Europeans Transparency Initiative (ETI). The purpose of the workshop was to provide Brussels based NGOs with an update on the ETI, more specifically on the code of conduct for interest representatives and the register for interest representatives. Over 25 representatives of a wide range of organisations participated in the meeting.

A report on the discussion will soon be available.

Find the Civil Society Contact Group [briefing on the ETI](#) on here.

"Making your voice heard in the EU - A guide for NGOs" now available in more languages

The Civil Society Contact Group is happy to announce the publication of the training handbook "Making your voice heard in the EU - A guide for NGOs" now also in [Bulgarian](#), [Estonian](#), [Italian](#) and [Spanish](#). It is specifically designed for those 'newcomer' NGOs and activists that are in the process of establishing a European strategy. It does so by providing tailored-made information on EU institutions, the way European NGOs work, as well as lobbying tips, illustrated by examples of EU level campaigns.

You can also download it in English, French, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese and Slovene. Cooperation with a Romanian organisation has been established to provide you with a Romanian version.

New look for act4europe website

The EU Civil Society Contact Group's website www.act4europe.org finally appears restructured and redesigned. On the homepage you will next to a short presentation of the Civil Society Contact Group find our latest news. A new navigation bar shall help you to find the information you are looking for more easily. We hope the information provided is helpful for you!

Any feedback is welcome! (coordinator@act4europe.org)

3. FUTURE OF EUROPE

From Constitution to Reform Treaty

The Heads of state and government during the Council meeting at the end of June agreed on the mandate for the Inter-governmental conference (IGC) that will negotiate the new EU treaty that will replace the draft constitution – and not yet on the treaty itself. However, given that the issues are very sensitive, the mandate is extremely detailed. The main points included in the mandate are:

- *Charter of Fundamental Rights*: an article referring to the Charter and giving it a legally binding status will be introduced. A protocol states that the charter does not apply in the UK (and probably in Ireland and Poland). However the scope and validity of this exemption has already been questioned.
- *Terminological and status changes*: The idea of a European Constitution is abandoned. The future text will be called "Reform Treaty" and will amend existing Treaties. There will be no mention of symbols of the EU (anthem, flag or the motto) in the Reform Treaty. There will be no European Minister of Foreign Affairs. Instead the reform treaty foresees a "High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy". However, the scope of activities remains the same.
- *Voting system*: The extension of the qualified majority voting in the Council is postponed to November 2014. A new blocking minority system is put in place so that a group of member states can ask for further negotiations on a draft.
- *Primacy of EU law over national law*: a declaration will recall that treaties and legal provisions adopted at EU level have primacy over the laws of Member States under the conditions laid down by the European Court of Justice's case law.
- *Common foreign and security policy*: There will be no European Minister of Foreign Affairs. Instead the reform treaty foresees a "High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy". However, the scope of activities remains the same.
- *Role of national parliaments*: National parliaments are given a period of eight weeks to examine draft EU legislative text. In the draft constitution the period foreseen was six weeks.

The provisions on participatory democracy shall be kept in the Reform Treaty.

Find a [briefing on the mandate for the IGC](#) and the next steps here.

Find the [Council conclusions](#) here.

Timetable for Reform Treaty

An Inter-governmental Conference (IGC) will be convened by the Portuguese presidency next week, on July 23. The first weeks will be dedicated to translating the Council conclusion into legal text. After that there will be another political phase when EU foreign ministers discuss the document in early September. The Portuguese presidency aims at having only three months of negotiations and to have the treaty signed off by EU leaders on October 18-19.

After the IGC, the treaty will have to be ratified by each of the 27 Member States. The Council wants the new treaty to be adopted by all Member States by spring 2009 (elections of the European Parliament and renewal of the European Commission). Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern announced that Ireland would hold a referendum on the Reform Treaty. Referenda are also possible in Denmark and the Netherlands, where a decision still has to be taken. French president Nicolas Sarkozy does not intend to ratify the Reform Treaty in parliament.

The Union of European Federalists and the Young European Federalists run a campaign for a European referendum on the Reform Treaty. Find more information on <https://www.europeanreferendum.eu/>

European Parliament gives green light to Intergovernmental Conference

The European Parliament (EP) on Wednesday July 11 adopted its opinion backing the mandate for the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), a legal prerequisite to start any IGC. The EP welcomed that most of the content of the draft constitution will be included in the Reform Treaty. A large majority of MEPs also support the tight timetable of the IGC and the ratification. The opinion regrets the increased number of exemptions to be included in the Reform Treaty. The EP underlined that it will keep an open dialogue with national parliaments and civil society throughout the IGC and the ratification procedure.

The three members of the European Parliament (EP) that will represent the EP in the IGC were elected on July 12. They are Elmar Brok (EPP-ED), Enrique Baron Crespo (PES) and Andrew Duff (ALDE).

Find the [EP opinion](#) here.

Majority of EU citizens support idea of a European constitution

The latest results of the Eurobarometer survey show that 66% of citizens support the idea of a common constitution for the EU. However they were not asked about their opinion on the existing draft constitution but about the general concept of a constitution. Support for a constitution, compared to last autumn, has risen significantly in Spain, Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Poland. In the same time it has decreased in Greece, Cyprus and Finland. General support for the EU has risen to the highest level since the early 1990s.

An [opinion survey](#) by the Financial Times shows that most people want a referendum on a new EU treaty.

Find the [Eurobarometer report](#) here.

4. PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

European Parliament's citizens' agora

Gérard Onesta, green member of the European Parliament (EP) and vice-president of the EP, launched the [idea](#) of the citizens' agora in early 2006. The citizen's agora is conceived as a place for debate for citizens. It will bring together between 500 and 700 active citizens': representatives of civil society, business organisations and members of the European Parliament (MEP) in a two days meeting in the EP in Brussels. An overarching topic will lead the discussions mostly taking place in workshops of not more than 100 people. The first Agora will take place on November 8 and 9 on the issue of the new treaty and the future of the EU. The invitations to civil society organisations will be sent out in early September. The first two Agoras are conceived as a trial period and will be evaluated afterwards. Unfortunately the participation of civil society organisations in the preparations has been very limited and intransparent.

A website dedicated to the citizens' agora shall soon be available.

Directorate General Sanco stakeholder involvement conference

The directorate general responsible for health and consumer protection (DG Sanco) held a big stakeholder involvement conference on May 23 in Brussels. The conference was the occasion to present the outcomes of the healthy democracy process. This process included different stakeholders in a debate about their cooperation with the directorate general. A final report presents concrete recommendations and DG Sanco takes commitments on a couple of them.

The Secretariat General of the Commission welcomed the process and encouraged other directorate generals to take inspiration from what is seen as a good practice.

Find the report of the [healthy democracy process](#) and the [conference documents](#) here.

European citizen's consultation: What will happen with the results?

The European citizen's consultation is one of six projects supported in the framework of Plan D and the period of reflection. It has brought together citizens in all 27 member states to discuss the future of the EU. The final report, which summarizes the discussions that took place in the member states, identifies three policy priorities for the Union:

- a stronger role for the EU in family and social welfare policies, with citizens suggesting that it should do far more to encourage Member States to pursue active family and social policies in a wide range of areas, including health care and employment, and ensure basic minimum standards;
- a pan-European response to immigration and integration issues making greater use of external relations policy tools such as development aid as well as focusing on issues such as border controls;
- a common EU energy policy.
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A group of EU policymakers in June met with participants in Plan D projects. The outcomes of different projects were presented in order for them to be kept in mind by heads of state and government during the June summit next week. Communication Commissioner Margot Wallström proposed to introduce a citizen assessment complementing the existing impact assessment of EU legislation. She also put forward the idea of citizens' summit to be held in parallel to EU summits and promised the setting up of a permanent plan D.

Find the [final report of the European citizens' consultation](#) here.

European Economic and Social Committee Civil Society Prize: Call for nominations opened

For the second year, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) will award the EESC prize for organised civil society. In 2007, it shall reward outstanding activities by civil society to help promote European integration and identity. The deadline for submitting nominations is 28 September 2007.

Find the [operational details](#) about the prize, including application and selection procedures here.

5. NEWS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS

Members' latest newsletters

European Forum for the Arts and Heritage

<http://www.efah.org/index.php?id=14&pagelang=en>

European Public Health Alliance

<http://www.epha.org/a/2686>

CONCORD

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Public/Page.php?ID=1186>

Social Platform

<http://www.socialplatform.org/News.asp>