

EU Civil Society Contact Group

Presidency of the European Union
José Sócrates
Prime Minister
Rua da Imprensa à Estrela 4
1200-888 Lisboa
Portugal

Brussels, July 16 2007

Re: *Civil society participation during Intergovernmental Conference on Reform Treaty*

Dear Prime Minister Socrates,

Ahead of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on the Reform Treaty, the Civil Society Contact Group which represents eight main NGOs families working at European level, would like to better understand how the Portuguese presidency will ensure transparency and openness of the IGC debates, especially towards civil society organisations.

Throughout the convention on the Future of Europe and the IGC in 2003, members of the Civil Society Contact Group campaigned for a treaty text that reflects concerns of women and men living in Europe. As IGCs have traditionally been closed processes offering no possibilities for civil society to engage the Civil Society Contact Group very much welcomed the opening up of the negotiation process through the convention method.

We trust that the Portuguese presidency will keep up the good practices and ensure that the upcoming IGC process is open and transparent. We would therefore be very keen to learn how the Portuguese presidency plans to engage with civil society organisations.

In order to strengthen a coherent and effective strategy of involving civil society and engaging European citizens in the process, we call upon the Portuguese presidency to:

- **Make the first consolidated version of the new treaty rapidly public** in order to allow civil society organisations to follow and input in the process. This is also requested by the European Parliament opinion on the matter.
- **Hold meetings between civil society and the presidency** of the Union (at least two, one at the end of August and one at the end of September), in which the presidency would brief the representatives of civil society organisations on the current negotiations and take on board their concerns,
- **Announce publicly at the launch meeting of the IGC** measures foreseen to allow civil society participation.

The European Parliament in its opinion on the IGC calls on "Member States to ensure full transparency of the work done by the IGC, notably by publishing all the documents submitting to it for discussion". We very much support this request and are confident the Portuguese Presidency will ensure it is met in a timely manner.

Women and men living in Europe want and expect Europe to provide moral and accountable leadership. The treaty revision is an important step in re-connecting Europeans to the EU if it takes their concerns seriously.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Ilona Kish
Chair of the Civil Society Contact Group
Secretary-General of the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage

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The CSCG brings together eight large European NGO platforms in the following fields: culture (EFAH), development (CONCORD), environment (Green 10), human rights (HRDN), lifelong learning (EUCIS), public health (EPA), social (Social Platform) and women (EWL). Together we work to develop the dialogue between civil society organisations and the EU institutions as an essential part of strengthening participatory democracy.