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PRESS CONFERENCE

of the European Referendum Campaign

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

on **Wednesday, June 02, 2004 - at 14.30**

Paul-Henri Spaak Building - Room P0A050

PARTICIPANTS:

Karel DE GUCHT MP - Belgium
Convention Member, former VLD (Liberals) party leader

Jens-Peter BONDE MEP - Denmark
Convention Member, June Movement

Dr. Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS - Germany
Secretary General FDP (Liberals) Saarland

Géraldine PHILIBERT - France
Adviser, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)

Marian ZDEB - Confession Survey
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Thomas RUPP - Moderation
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EP Elections: Missed chance to debate the EU Constitution

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Most parties ignore the voters request for EU Referendums

In a press conference in the European Parliament on Wednesday June 2 the European Referendum Campaign presented the results of the parties confession survey. Only 30% of the parties are in favour of a referendum on the EU Constitution. Representatives from several parties showed that being in favour of a referendum is not linked to one's attitude pro or contra the EU Constitution - but it is linked to the basic question of democracy.

If there are any questions... please do not hesitate to contact **Thomas Rupp** on **gsm +49 163 5944466**

or on one of the phone numbers mentioned below.

No respect for the peoples' wish

In a survey among more than 250 parties across Europe that are campaigning for the EP Elections only 75 parties committed themselves to be in favour of a referendum on the EU constitution. "So only 30% of the parties want to let their voters have a say on this important question," states Marian Zdeb, who was in charge of the survey in the framework of the European Referendum Campaign (ERC). "In contrast to that, 84% of the EU citizens are in favour of a referendum. The conclusion must be that most parties do not represent their voters demands. It shows very clearly that although all parties want to be elected by the people, most of them want to use their mandates for ruling as they please. The voters should consider this fact when they are casting their ballot."

The survey is not over yet. In the press conference in the European Parliament the ERC-activists asked all remaining parties to join the list by committing their support for a constitutional referendum. "There are a lot of parties that are yet undecided on that question", so Zdeb. "They just did not discuss the topic. And all this, one week before the EU Constitution will most probably be agreed by the IGC."

A missed chance

In many countries the election campaigns are totally conquered by national topics. "Our idea was to remind the parties on the topic of the EU Constitution", so Zdeb. "In the campaigns the whole issue was nearly not discussed at all." The chance to use the pre-election period to inform about and to debate the content of the upcoming EU Constitution has been missed. An argument quite often used against a referendum - namely that the debate would be dominated by domestic politics - has proven to become true for the elections. Referendums on the EU Constitution in all EU countries carried out at the same day - as the ERC demands it since the beginning of 2002 – would be an excellent opportunity to generate a Europe-wide adequate debate about the future of Europe. And it would be the only chance to get the people involved.

Referendums – it is about democracy

The press conference showed, that it is very well possible to be in favour of a EU Constitution and at the same time commit yourself to a referendum. **Karel De Gucht**, former party leader of the Flemish Liberal Democrats (**VLD**), was one of the first of the 99 Convention Members who signed the ERC appeal in favour of referendums. He is convinced that a referendum on the EU-constitutional treaty is one of the necessary steps towards a higher level of legitimacy for the EU. But in the past, referendums quite often were written off as populist, simplistic and a hazard to the European project's future. "There is little doubt in my mind that Belgium's electorate would, after a serious public debate, support the European Constitution provided it goes along the lines of the European Convention's proposal", says de Gucht referring to a recent television poll that showed 9 out of ten Flemish voters in favour of

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more European integration. "Letting citizens decide is always a risk," Karel De Gucht sums up, "but not letting them speak their mind is far more dangerous."

One of the achievements of the European Referendum Campaign is, that in the question of referenda it succeeded to bring the EU sceptics at one table with the federalists. Therefore also the Danish MEP **Jens-Peter Bonde (June Movement)**, a member of the European Convention who is opposing the EU Constitution, supports the campaign. "We urge all movements and parties to work for a referendum on the same topic in all European countries at the same day", says Bonde. He stressed that it would be very important to ask the citizens if that is the way they want to proceed before a European State is created by a European Constitution. "We should have a genuine debate about the constitution as soon as possible, starting before the European Elections. Then we should have the referendum on the same constitution in all countries." Bonde mentioned two democratic alternatives to the problem of the current democratic deficit: "A federalist democratic super-state or, what we prefer, a Europe of democracies. Between those two views we should have the battle all over Europe. And in the end we should all be prepared to accept the peoples' decision."

At a recent conference of the French Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) the members decided with more than 70% majority to support a referendum. "The UMP is very much in favour of the European Constitution", says **Géraldine Philibert** from the UMP. "And we are also in favour of a referendum to decide about that. The referendum is the real counterweight of the citizens, a means of returning the word to those that do not have it anymore, to enable every one to bring forward his or her point of view. Therefore we think that after a constructive debate the French people and all other European citizens should be able to decide - with a good understanding of the facts - about their destiny in Europe."

The decision about a referendum in France – to be made by Jacques Chirac (UMP) – will have a crucial impact on the ongoing of the campaign. Less probable but still possible is a referendum in Germany. The German Liberals (FDP) tried several times to change the German constitution to allow a binding referendum and were blocked by the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Christian Democrats. **Dr. Jorgo Chatzimarkakis**, one of the FDP's top candidates, is – as his party - also strongly in favour of a European Constitution, but: "If the European Union in the future wants to be not only a union of states but a union of the citizens," he states, "then the draft EU Constitution must be legitimized by the citizens." During his election campaign Chatzimarkakis got a very clear message from the German voters: A big majority wants to decide about the Constitution in a referendum.

Spread the message! - Internet based signature campaign.

„Apart from the few parties who respect the people's wish for referendums“, so ERC coordinator Thomas Rupp, „the citizens obviously cannot count on the support of most of the EP candidates in this question.“ Therefore the ERC is launching a new internet based signature gathering campaign. At www.eu04.com individuals can sign a petition in 20 languages asking for referendums. The priority of the question how to adopt the EU Constitution will increase dramatically if the constitution will be finally agreed by at the IGC mid June. „By these dynamics then amount of signatures will increase significantly“, hopes Rupp. „It is very important for this campaign, that this site will be promoted by banner ads, articles, link sections and through mailing lists. So please help us and spread the message!“

The European Referendum Campaign (ERC) is strictly neutral concerning the result of the referendums. It is neither in favour nor against an EU constitution but pro democracy. It is supported by a broad network of about 300 organisation all over Europe.

Read more details about the campaign on
www.european-referendum.org AND
www.eu04.com



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Parties Confession Survey

Idea - Results - Background - Comment



www.eu04.com

Idea

During four weeks more than 250 parties that are campaigning for the EP Elections were contacted several times by telephone and email. They received a survey questionnaire asking: **Is your party in favour of a referendum on the EU Constitution in your country and/or in all EU member states?**

The idea was - at least to try - to remind the parties on the topic of the EU Constitution that will be most probably agreed shortly after the EP elections. In the campaigns the whole issue was nearly not discussed at all. The EP Elections could have been a perfect opportunity to have a proper debate about the CONTENTS of the draft Constitution.

So the parties were more or less successful to avoid that kind of a discussion. With the Confession Survey we wanted to find out, what is the ratio of pro-referendum parties compared to the fact that 84% of the citizens want to have a say on that question. In addition we tried to put the topic of the EU Constitution on the agenda of the parties.



Results

All in all a little bit more than 75 parties have „confessed“ to be in favour of a referendum yet. **The list is still open for more parties who have not answered yet.** We will go on with the survey until the election mid June. All information and the questionnaire can be downloaded on www.european-referendum.org

The alarming aspect of that result is, that only about 30% of the parties respect the wish of 84% of their voters. So the conclusion must be, that most of the parties do not represent the citizens' will to have a say on the EU Constitution.

Background

Among the parties who are in favour of a referendum there are some slightly different approaches:

+++ Some of them spoke in favour of a referendum in just their country, as they did not want to make a statement about „other countries' affairs“.

+++ Due to the importance of the EU Constitution most of the parties spoke in favour of an EU-wide referendum held on the same day. There are different views on how this EU-wide referendum could

be organized. (Please see comment below.)

+++ A lot of parties especially in the new members states still have no position about the EU Constitution neither about the content nor about the question whether it should be decided by referendums or not.

+++ About 75% of the parties did not want to make an official statement as they have not yet decided on this issue, or fear having a bad publicity in their election campaign.

+++ Only a few parties declared publicly that they are NOT in favour of a referendum on the EU Constitution. The ERC would like to express its respect to those who are willing to publicly state their position.

+++ There are also parties that are split in that opinion. Where fractions of the party stand against each other or where the party leader spoke in favour of a referendum but the party made no decision etc.

Comment

If the ERC talks about a Europe-wide referendum we mean simultaneous referendums in all countries at the same day and therefore a Europe-wide event.

In the light of Art. 48 of the applying EU Treaties, and according to the “Declaration in the Final Act of Signature of the Treaty Establishing the Constitution” in the EU Constitution - drawn up by the Convention on the Future of Europe - the ERC is demanding that the results of the national referendums should apply only for single countries, so that no country is outvoted!

(A collection of arguments pro/contra a pan-European referendum will be published soon on our homepage)

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Parties in favour of a referendum on the EU Constitution



www.eu04.com

This is still an open list. We are more than ready to take other parties on board if they send us the confession survey questionnaire, which can be downloaded from our homepage.

Austria

Die Grünen
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs - FPÖ

Belgium

Ecolo
Groen!
Mouvement des citoyens pour le changement - MCC
Sociaal Progressief Alternatief - SPA
Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten - VLD
Vivant
Vrije Democraten - SPIRIT

Cyprus

No entries!

Czech Republic

Občansko-demokratická strana - ODS *
Strana Zelených - SZ

Denmark

Danske Folkeparti - DF
De Grønne
Det Radikale Venstre *
Enhedsliste/ De Rød-Grønne
Folke-bevaegelsen
Juni Bevægelsen
Kristeligt Folkeparti - KRF
VENSTRE *

Estonia

No entries!

Finland

Christian Dem in Fin
Suomen Keskusta
Vasemmistoliitto - VAS
Vihreä Liitto (Green League of Finland)

France

Chasse, Pêche, Nature, Traditions - CPNT *
Europo Demokratio Esperanto - EDE
Les Verts *
Parti Communiste Français *
Parti Federaliste
Parti Socialiste
Union pour un Mouvement Populaire - UMP

Germany

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN
Deutsche Kommunistische Partei - DKP
Feministische Partei - DIE FRAUEN
Freie Demokratische Partei - FDP
Graue Panther - DIE GRAUEN
Die Tierschutzpartei
Partei d. Demokratischen Sozialismus - PDS
Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei - ödp

Greece

Ecologisti - Ecologists Greens
Hellenic Front
SYNAPSISMOS - SYN

Hungary

No entries!

Ireland

Comhaontas Glas - Green Party
Labour Party
Socialist Party

Italy

Socialisti Democratici - SDI

Latvia

Latvia's way - LC

Lithuania

No entries!

Luxembourg

Aktiounskomitee fir Demokratie a Rentegerechtegkeet - ADR
Déi Greng
Demokratesch Partei - DP
Lëtzebuergesch Sozialistesche Arbechterpartei - LSAP

Malta

Alternattiva Demokratika

Netherlands

Democraten 66 - D66
Groene Links - GL *
Socialistische Partij

Poland

Liga Polskich Rodzin - LPR
Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc - PiS
Samooobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej

Portugal

Os Verdes - PEV

Slovakia

Strana Zelených Na Slovensku

Slovenia

Stranka Mladih Slovenije - SMS

Spain

Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya
Izquierda Unida

Sweden

Junilistan *
Miljöpartiet de Gröna
Vänster Partiet

United Kingdom

Alliance Party *
British Conservative Party *
Democratic Unionist Party Northern Ireland *
Green Party of England and Wales *
Labour Party *
Liberal Democrats - LD *
Plaid Cymru Party of Wales - PCYMRU *
Scottish National Party - SNP *
Scotts Green Party *
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Northern Ireland - SDLP *
UK Independence Party

** these parties are in favour of a referendum ONLY in their own country OR they did not make a clear statement on the issue of holding referendums in all other countries of the European Union.*

There are also some parties listed - especially among the Green parties - who are only in favour of a pan-European referendum.

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Internet based ERC signature campaign in 20 languages



www.eu04.com

Obviously many responsible politicians underestimate the wish of the people to be informed about the EU Constitution and their demand for being involved in the process of shaping the future of Europe. Active and committed citizens have now the opportunity to sign the ERC petition in the internet: "I want fair referendums on the EU Constitution in my country and in all countries concerned (preferably on the same day)."



www.eu04.com

In 20 languages this site provides some basic information about the campaign and the need for referendums. Its main purpose is: quick information and easy signing in all languages. With a popup the individuals from all EU countries can sign the petition and even subscribe to a newsletter.

The URL is very easy to memorize and shall be spread through the internet. The whole procedure of reading and signing does not take longer than 5 minutes. - For all the background information and detailed facts about the campaign there is a link to the www.european-referendum.org

Spread the Message!

The logo was transferred in all languages. Its basic message is: "EU Constitution? - Ask the people!" This is the very essential demand of the ERC.

The logo, links as well as banner ads shall be put on the websites of the ERC supporters, parties, MEPs, candidates for the EP elections, media homepages and a lot of other homepages all over Europe. We also think about asking the print media to publish little ads to promote the campaign. In addition there will be postcards and Posters to promote the "eu04.com"

If the whole topic will attract the public interest, after the EU Constitution is agreed by the IGC, then the signature gathering in the internet could explode. The aim is to make pressure on the heads of state to announce referendums in their countries.



FR



LI



EN



MT



PT



DE

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Facts about the European Referendum Campaign (ERC)



www.eu04.com

The (ERC) is...

... a Europe-wide campaign with **one single goal**:

- => to get as many referendums **about the EU Constitution**
- => in as many countries as possible
- => on the same day.

... **strictly neutral** concerning the result of the referendum. The ERC is neither in favour nor against an EU constitution but **pro democracy**. - Let the people decide about the future of their Europe!

... **a broad coalition** of NGOs and individuals, who are joining forces on this single issue, even if they are opposing each other in the question of to be pro or anti constitution.

The ERC was started - end of 2001 - when it became obvious that a convention is about to draft an EU constitution. The main impulse came from the European Direct Democracy movement (NDDIE).

In the meantime the ERC is *the* international campaign demanding referendums on the EU constitution with a project offices in Frankfurt and Brussels.

...supported by a broad and balanced coalition of NGOs

The European Referendum Campaign is supported by

300 organisations from
25 EU countries representing
4.5 Million members

These NGOs are building a broad and balanced coalition. They are dealing with the following topics:

19%	Development / Globalisation / Peace
18%	Human / Women's / Citizens' / Animals' Rights
16%	(Direct) Democracy
14%	Parties / Unions / Students / Youth NGOs
10%	Social Life / Education / Culture / Church
8%	pro EU organisations
7%	anti EU organisations
4%	Think Tanks
4%	Business Organisations

...supported by members of the European Convention

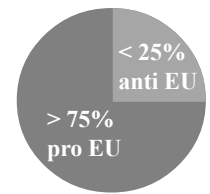
The appeal for referendums was supported by

99

members of the Convention on the Future of Europe who derived from all represented countries. A resolution was handed over to Vice President Giuliano Amato, who was among the signatories.

More than 75% of the signatories of the appeal are mostly in favour of a further EU integration. The two big political mainstream parties provided 60% of the signatures.

The appeal was supported by members of the National Parliaments and European parliament, as well as by representatives of the Governments and Committees.



...supported by a huge majority of the European citizens

The Eurobarometer polls show it clearly:

84% of the European Population (EU25) has a positive attitude towards referendums on the EU Constitution: 43% think it is essential, 41% think it is useful. Only 11% believe that it would be useless to hold referendums (Nov 03).

71% of the European Population (EU25) did not know (Nov 03) that the Convention on the Future of Europe made a draft constitutional treaty.

71% of the European Population (EU25) feels badly informed about the draft constitution (Jan 04).

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History of the European Referendum Campaign (ERC)



www.eu04.com

June 2004

The month started with another nice surprise: Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Belgium, called a non binding referendum on June, 1. One day before we launched the EU04.com homepage.

Mai 2004

A new pan-European signature gathering was prepared. Therefore we established the homepage EU04.com.



April 2004



Tony Blair changed his mind. We had not expected his u-turn that early. A heavy debate about the referendum question arose all over Europe. ERC-groups in Scandinavia, Germany, Belgium and many other countries intensified their efforts to gain a referendum.

March 2004

With the surprising result of the elections in Spain a consensus on the constitution became very likely. We started a tour through the UK with our bus and the display. The pressure in the UK was very high. How long could Tony Blair refuse the referendum?



February 2004

Together with Vote 2004 we organised an event in Berlin. Chirac, Blair and Schröder met to discuss the EU Constitution. Hard-hitting adverts on poster vans were around the summit site.

January 2004

The summit had failed. Thus the schedule had changed dramatically and we had to find a new strategy. Originally we planned to work only until June 2004.

December 2003

At the European Day of Action on Dec 6, 2003 activists from across Europe spread our message in the streets of 20 countries.



As the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) took place activists from the European Referendum Campaign organised an event with a 7m high inflatable display. During that event the political leaders tried to finish the negotiations about the upcoming constitution - without success.



November 2003

We presented the ERC at the European Social Forum in Paris (November 12-16). 20 activists from six countries worked at the stand. Two workshops and a seminar were held to promote the European Referendum Campaign.

October 2003

ERC wins Grand-Prix at the NewEuropeans-Congress in Paris. A jury of 200 citizens were asked to vote on the internet. The ERC have got the award in the category CITIZENSHIP - Political Action (report). And the Winner is: ERC



September 2003

Netherlands get referendum. Activists in the Netherlands achieved a great success. A majority in parliament voted in favour of a referendum.

August 2003

The summer break ... nevertheless the time was used for participating in events like the summer meeting of Attac (Germany). A seminar was organized together with Mehr Demokratie. Staff from the office in Frankfurt joined the Bus on his way through Eastern Germany.



July 2003

Nice Surprise: The government of Luxemburg announced a referendum on the EU-Constitution. After the end of the Convention we reorganise our tasks. The website has been - once more - revised.



June 2003

At the last plenary session of the Convention on the Future of Europe, ERC activists hand over the resolution to the presidium of the European Convention: 97 Convention members and 120 NGOs from 25 countries demand referendums on the European Constitution in all countries concerned.

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The resolution shall be approved by the presidium and be forwarded to the IGC. At a media event in Brussels, a 7 meter tall "EU Constitution" is presented in front of the European Parliament.

May 2003

It becomes increasingly clear, that there will be referendums on the EU constitution in: Denmark, Ireland, France and Spain... that there is a good chance in Austria, Italy and Portugal... and there are serious debates and statements by leading politicians in Germany, Finland, Netherlands and Belgium.

April 2003

The resolution of the working group is presented at a press conference in Brussels; so far 38 members of the Convention have declared their support.

from March 2003

Increasing level of ERC activities in nine countries; there are organisations which take responsibility for the campaign in their countries.

from January 2003

A working group of Convention members are drafting a resolution text, very close to the ERC appeal. This process was initiated by the IRI Europe and Mehr Demokratie; ERC-campaigners cooperate with Convention members to get as many supporters in the Convention as possible.



November 2002

Official launch of the ERC at the 3rd NDDIE conference in Bratislava with participants from 22 countries. *democracy international* is founded as an umbrella organisation.

October 2002

The ERC project-office is opened in Frankfurt, Germany. The level of activities in different countries has increased constantly.



June 2002

Participation at the Civil Society Hearing of the Convention. First distribution of the ERC folder at the Convention and EP; the idea of referendums on the European Constitution is presented. Several face-to-face meetings with Convention members.

May 2002

A first ERC folder and the ERC homepage (www.european-referendum.org) are created.

from April 2002

ERC activists regularly visit the Convention meetings in Brussels.

April 2002

Agreed by a broad coalition, the demands of the ERC are put into an appeal.

March 2002

We have been able to raise attention on the referendum topic among the members of the Convention on the Future of Europe. The Convention on the Future of Europe starts its work.

The ERC idea is presented at several events



throughout Europe. Goal: to get the broadest possible coalition - especially between pro- and EU-critical organisations.

February 2002

After a series of meetings to involve a wide range of political movements and players the decision is taken to launch a campaign. The aim is to make sure that the people will have a say on THEIR future in Europe.

December 2001

Declaration of Laeken: A Convention on the Future of Europe is established. First public discussions on a possible EU Constitution.

since 1999

The "NDDIE - Network for Direct Democracy in Europe" was established as a Europe-wide network of grassroots movements in favour of direct democracy. Participants from more than 23 countries attended the NDDIE conferences in Munich (2000) and Prague (2001). - The main impulses for establishing such a network came from Mehr Demokratie in Germany, WIT Belgium and the Referendum Platform, Netherlands.



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