

COVER NOTE

from Secretariat

to The Convention

Subject : **Final text adopted by the European Youth Convention**

Members of the Convention will find attached the final text adopted by the European Youth Convention, which was held in Brussels on 9-12 July 2002.



Final Text adopted by the European Youth Convention

Brussels, 12 July

Introduction

*"The Union needs to be more democratic, more transparent and more efficient. It also has to resolve three basic challenges: **how to bring citizens, and primarily the young, closer to the European design and the European institutions**, how to organise politics and the European political area in an enlarged Union and how to develop the Union into a stabilising factor and a model in the new, multipolar world."*

From the 'Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union'.

Involving young people in the construction of the European Union was one of the specific goals of the Laeken Declaration. Young people are not only important for Europe's future, they also have an essential role to play in the Europe of today. The strong results of the Youth Convention demonstrate beyond a doubt that young people should not be included only because they are young, but also because they can make a real contribution to the construction of the European Union of tomorrow.

As we look to the future, we can do so with self-confidence, self-confidence based on the achievements of the most successful integration model in the world. European integration has delivered unprecedented peace, stability, and prosperity for millions of citizens, based on the resolution of conflicts according to the rule of law. For today's youth, the most European generation so far, European co-operation is a natural way of tackling our common issues. We do not have fears or limitations from the past and can therefore look confidently towards our common European future.

Already today, Europe is more than a technocratic or economic concept, but we must develop it as a political community, based on common values, and offering a vision of a united and peaceful continent. This vision of Europe has been the dream for past generations; today we are about to realise this dream. In this process more and more young people are focusing on overcoming the shortcomings and contradictions of the Union of today by simplification of the treaties.

Active young people at the local, regional, national and European levels, can play an important role in stimulating debate, promoting active citizenship and European identity. Many of them do so in youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations, which have often proven to be able to reach and represent those from the most marginalised and excluded groups. However, despite the fact that young people account for one third of the EU's voting population, they remain underrepresented within the EU's decision-making bodies. We believe a greater effort from all relevant bodies should be made to remedy this.

The Youth Convention has made our views clear: the young people represented here demand a European Union which offers a vision of a united and democratic future, one which offers accessible government to its citizens, and one which has the instruments and the legitimacy to meet their expectations. We have been bold in our demands: demands for an ambitious reform of the Union, which equips it to meet the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow. A Europe united in its diversity is achievable. We ask no more of you than we have been willing and able to do for ourselves.

Missions and Visions for the European Union

We, the youth of Europe, have a historic opportunity to voice our views on the future of our continent.

We are the first generation to live in one Europe, without the Iron Curtain.

We want a Europe of tolerance, openness and inclusiveness. We want a Europe built on the fundamental values of peace, freedom, dialogue, equality, solidarity and respect for human rights and based on the principle of equality among member states. At the heart of our vision is a Europe responsible for and to its citizens. The time has come to create a true European citizenship.

A citizens' Europe is a Europe striving for social cohesion inside the Union and across the world. It is a Europe committed to peace and respect, able to give European answers to European challenges, with due respect to the regional and national identity and heritage of its citizens. The European citizen has to be seen not only as a separate individual but within the context of his or her social, cultural and ecological background. This background is mainly influenced by his or her national identity. Our common European identity cannot replace these national roots but complement and enlarge them.

We should be engaged in developing a Europe, a Europe which discusses to decide, with more democratic, transparent institutions, more effective decision-making, a Europe closer to us, the citizens. The European Union should have as its purpose the advancement of democracy, modernisation of economic and social structures, environmental protection and the fight against exclusion and poverty.

We need a Europe present on the international scene with great influence over the major international strategic decisions and therefore able to give valuable answers to the challenges posed by globalisation. To cease being a political dwarf, Europe must have the means to position itself as a united global actor.

1. Europe is not only an economic and political entity, but also a social entity with great cultural diversity. Thus, Europe must be committed to further improving and developing its greatest social and political achievements. We can see very clearly that all over the continent

social protection has become part of our identity. Social rights are basic rights and are part of European citizenship. Today only the European level is capable of providing welfare for everyone. In order to become a welfare Europe, the EU should develop common legislation in the fields of social policy and equal opportunities. The Charter of Fundamental Rights is a crucial instrument in the construction of a Citizens' Europe, provided that it becomes legally binding. It therefore has to become the first chapter of a European constitution. The Union must allow all European citizens to benefit from common solidarity, to gain recognition, mobility, freedoms. This implies social harmonisation, which makes it possible to coordinate wage policies and therefore to define collective agreements recognised throughout the Union. For this we need a Europe which defends the public services, which preserves its mission.

After the single market and the Euro it will be time to create a European cultural framework. That means fostering training and mobility programmes for young people in order to reach a free and open labour market. This would make it possible to overcome the obstacles to the recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications. We propose to introduce the teaching of the process of European integration.

2. There must be a clear and transparent distribution of competencies between the Union and the national level in the European constitution so that people understand who is responsible for what and how they can contribute to the political process. The distribution of competencies has to be guided by the principle of subsidiarity, which best corresponds to the idea of the human being at the centre of the European Union.

3. One of the fundamental aims of European integration is to ensure sustainable development on the continent. Economic growth should be combined with a sound social policy aimed at a higher level of employment and ensuring fundamental worker's rights, especially amongst young people. Stronger EU strategies to combat long-term unemployment must be developed. Clear ecological standards must also be upheld, including in the area of nuclear safety. If Europe is to look forward to a safe future it is obligatory that both the Member States and the Candidate states stop the use of nuclear energy. In the transitional stage - until all power stations are closed - high and obligatory safety standards must be enforced for all atomic power stations in order to guarantee our safety. Furthermore, the EU must support renewable forms of energy.

4. In order to transform the European Union into a real area of solidarity, we need a solid and expanded European budget. The European budget should be funded in a way that is fairer than today. The introduction of common taxes should therefore be considered in order to prepare the European Union for the challenges of the coming years. This includes the introduction of a common capital gains tax and of a tax on energy consumption (except renewable energies), which will avoid tax competition and social dumping.
5. Education is an important force for innovation and empowerment. Our task must be to ensure free education for all and to ensure training opportunities.
6. Equality must be at the heart of the European project. It is essential to the concept of European citizenship. We want to fight discrimination in all its forms and at all levels of our society. Whether it is because of gender, ethnic or social background, language, religion or beliefs, political opinions, disabilities, age or sexual orientation, we cannot tolerate systematic injustice.

The European Union should respect and value all of its citizens. The European Union should strengthen the national action plans on social inclusion and poverty. These plans should have common indicators of success, therefore allowing all of its citizens to live in dignity.

The European Union must be a union based on solidarity and freedom. The Union must adopt a common system of economic immigration and a fair and safe system of asylum. The European Union must promote the needs and the rights of young people. Action plans must empower the youth of Europe.

7. In accordance with the vision of a United Europe, we view all European countries as prospective EU Member States and support the enlargement of the European Union. The enlargement will create a broader region of peace and stability on the European continent with all its advantages. Since the end of the Cold War, there is a hope for stability and peaceful coexistence across the continent. This prospect of stability and safety will lead to the development of an area of prosperity, sustainable social and economic development.

8. International co-operation is also the antidote against nationalism, ethnic conflicts and dictatorships. The European Union must work for peace, democracy, human rights, disarmament and development across the world. Human rights are not domestic affairs; they must be safeguarded at international level. As the uneven distribution of wealth in the world is a threat to peace, economic co-operation is in itself a tool of security policy. A fair, coherent and strong development and co-operation policy is a necessity. The EU has a particular responsibility towards its neighbours and as stated above we see all European countries as prospective EU member states.
9. The European Union of the future has to include real possibilities of participation for its citizens and especially young people.
10. The Convention on the Future of Europe must achieve a breakthrough in reforming the European institutions. The competence of the EU and its Member States has to be clarified. Clear rules for institutions and decision-making processes have to be included. The principle of subsidiarity should always be followed. The role of the regions requires clear definition. The authority of the national parliaments and the national governments should be clarified. Special attention should be paid to respect the impact of less populous member states. A fully democratic framework for the Union should be established in the form of a federal parliamentary system.
11. In order to secure a strong Europe for the future it is essential that the EU put more emphasis on listening to its youth, facilitating cross-cultural and cross-border communication. It is essential that more programmes be initiated to bring together peer groups with common interests. Young artists, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and politicians should be brought together; their opinions should be voiced and heard. A successful Europe should be built together on a day-to-day basis.

We, the members of the European Youth Convention, are ready to shape the future of our generation, the future of our continent. We believe that a Youth Convention should above all have a clear demand to bring Europe closer to young people. We need a coherent European youth policy, giving clear answers to issues specific to young people. Europe must now have a clear vision on education, the information society, intercultural youth exchange, youth employment and the everyday problems of marginalised young people. This is what we, the youth of Europe, need the European Union for.

Democracy and Participation in the European Union - For A European Democracy

Brussels, and the political processes there, feel distant to us citizens. The alarmingly low turnouts at elections for the European Parliament illustrate this. Neither the citizens in general nor we, young people in particular, understand who is responsible for which policy in this labyrinth of European legislation. Intergovernmental Conferences and EU Summits from Maastricht to Nice have shown that EU decision-making is not transparent, not democratic and not efficient.

We, the young people of Europe, enjoin the European Convention to strive for more democracy, more transparency and more efficiency, in order to reconnect with its citizens. In order to achieve this goal, there have to be fundamental reforms to the nature of the EU. This should lead to a federal Constitution including the Charter of Fundamental Rights, a clearer division of competencies and a renewed institutional structure of Europe, in which the youth of Europe has a stronger say.

Charter of Fundamental Rights:

The Charter of Fundamental Rights must be included as a central part of this Constitution. It has to be legally binding and should be at the heart of the Constitution.

Competencies:

The Union of tomorrow must be based on decentralisation and diversity, not on petty bureaucracy and over-regulation. This means that the EU will only be in charge of those decisions, which cannot be achieved as well on national or regional levels. The execution of competencies should be based on the two principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, which have to be closely monitored. The principle of subsidiarity implies that decisions should be made at the lowest level of government. There should be a catalogue of exclusive competencies of the EU and of competencies shared between the EU and member states, and it should be clearly stated that all the other competencies belong to the member states. In order to attain an easily understandable and efficient political system of the European Union, the second and third pillar should be merged with the first pillar and therefore ensure an integrated EU policy in all policy fields.

Institutional Settings:

The Union needs a democratic, open and transparent decision-making system, accountable to its citizens, in order to reconnect the peoples of Europe with the decisions taken in their name. This

should be based on the democratic principle of the separation of powers.

As the only directly democratically elected body, the Parliament, representing the citizens, should co-decide in all policy fields. It should have full budgetary competence and it should have the right of initiative. Brussels should be the only residence of the European Parliament and its secretariat. Furthermore, the European Parliament should have the right to propose and elect the President of the European Commission and should have the power to remove individual Commissioners and to impeach the Commission President. The members of the European Parliament should be elected in standardised European elections.

The Council should meet in public. The constitutional regions, in agreement with their member states, should participate in the Council of Ministers when debating what belongs to the sphere of competencies of those regions. The Council should be reformed into a genuine second chamber, co-deciding together with the European Parliament on EU legislation. Decisions in especially sensitive areas can be made with a double majority of states and people. The right of veto should be banned in the decision-making system of the Union.

The European Commission is the guarantor of the European Constitution. The European Commission has to be transformed into a true European executive. It has to be fully accountable to the Parliament and the Council. The European Commission has to consult civil society actors when it makes use of its right of initiative.

All matters within the competence of the Union should be subject to the Court of Justice. Every citizen should have the right to approach the Court of Justice. The European Union should therefore be given legal personality. With a view to the eminent enlargement of the EU, all the official languages in the Member States shall be acknowledged as official EU languages.

The results of the Convention must be ratified in a European referendum, in order to guarantee that the citizens have the final say on the future of their Europe.

Involvement of the youth of Europe:

The reforms of the European Union should not be restricted to institutional changes and a new order of competencies. The future EU should be a Europe created by its citizens to serve their interests and needs. A more structured and more institutionalised dialogue with civil society should ensure

that the EU decides on topics, which actually matter for the citizens of the Union.

The Union shall include in its decision-making system its diversity of linguistic, ethnic and other social groups and shall set and enforce measurable targets on social inclusion and the eradication of poverty. The young people of Europe have to be involved as early as possible in decision-making processes involving the European institutions. The consultation process for the "White Paper on youth" was a good example of how EU institutions can work together with youth, our organisations and other parts of civil society.

Therefore we, as representatives of youth, call on the European Convention to ensure:

- that the idea of the White Paper on youth, which is to establish a youth committee, is heard directly by the European institutions.
- that the senior Convention works on an information strategy that will help to involve more citizens in the debate on the future of Europe.
- that, in this framework, citizens from all walks of life are given the opportunity to be fully engaged in this debate. The European Union acknowledges the importance of the involvement of all European citizens in policy development and implementation in the European Union. The EU especially recognises the fundamental rights of marginalised groups, such as disabled people, and people belonging to ethnic, cultural, or linguistic minorities, to be included in this process.
- that, building on this, the EU works on new ways to inform and educate people about Europe, ensuring that the citizens know what their political system looks like, so as to promote the ideas of shared identity and common values. Specific lessons on European culture, citizenship and institutions must be provided in every primary and secondary school. The yearly quota of hours is to be freely organised by each country.
- that additionally there is a strong link between young parliamentarians and young people in their electorate, in order to ensure that young people have the possibility to experience European politics.
- that all EU citizens have an EU passport, which is the same for all member states.

Europe in a globalised world

Europe's approach to relations with other regions of the world, its foreign policy, the challenge of ensuring peace and stability and its defence structures must be founded on the European values of democracy, freedom, equality, solidarity and respect for human rights.

Globalisation has led to a multi-polar world order with growing interdependence and at the same time a growing number of actors. These include international organisations, NGOs, large global corporations and private individuals. In this complex world order, the interests of Europe's citizens will only be heard if we speak with one voice.

Democratisation and sustainable development must be priorities of Europe's international efforts. Hence, it is important to maintain active dialogue with what is today's world periphery, since there can be no global progress as long as there is an economic division between the Northern and Southern hemispheres of the world. Furthermore, we must strongly promote talks on nuclear and conventional disarmament.

Only supranational institutions are able to provide stability and influence the forces of globalisation. We want the EU to work for a more co-operative world. The EU needs to increase its co-operation especially in the field of foreign policy. The following steps need to be implemented:

Development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy

Foreign Policy must become an exclusive competence of the European Union. The Foreign and Security policy should be integrated and decisions taken democratically by the European Parliament and Council. There should be a single Commissioner for Foreign Affairs who executes the common policy.

Ensuring Security in Europe

The EU should pursue a comprehensive approach to promoting peace and security, based on (1) conflict prevention, (2) crisis management involving the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) and the Petersberg tasks, (3) post-conflict institution building. The EU must develop a Defence Identity. The Rapid Reaction Force allows Europe to partake in peace-keeping and crisis management operations. However, it is unable to function without NATO assets and has no role in defending the EU. A European Army will be more efficient economically and will be more effective militarily.

No member state, however, should be forced against its will to participate in any European Defence structure. The EU shall respect the right of any member state to participate in international co-operation agreements external to the Union.

Solidarity with the Developing World

Only by advancing social justice and global solidarity can we build the foundations of peace and stability. The EU should achieve the UN target (on development aid) of 0.7% GDP by 2004 with the most of that being provided by the Union. The EU should prioritise the developing countries and should open the EU's markets to their exports. The EU should balance its aid budget between governments and NGOs. Debt relief based on agreements between donor and recipient countries must be advanced to relieve the poorest countries from massive debt burdens. Debt relief should be linked to progress on human and fundamental rights.

Immigration and Asylum

Besides being economically beneficial, migration is a historical and natural phenomenon, and it is also a constituting character of European culture. Globalisation of the market has made globalisation of fundamental rights and thus freedom of movement even more necessary. The EU must therefore implement a common active migration and integration policy and should promote it within European society through continuous education. All EU Member States should share the responsibility of the EU's external border control.

Fighting against AIDS

The EU must develop urgently a European plan to fight against AIDS, following the agreements of the UN. The EU should approve measures to facilitate the production and distribution of generic drugs against AIDS.

International Trade

Ensuring that flows of global capital, information and economic resources are beneficial to society is too big a task for any one nation state. The EU should work harder to promote better working conditions across the globe and to counteract anti-competitive practices. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and EU Customs Duty Policy bar access to European markets for the poorest countries in the World, preventing development and reducing trade. The policies of the EU in relation to the WTO, IMF, World Bank and GATT negotiations must reflect the need for social development and safeguard public services (such as education, health, public transport).

A leading role in Global Governance

The EU should play a leading role in promoting global governance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Children's Rights, along with other European values, are a powerful basis for European input into international institutions. EU states must speak with one voice in international institutions.

Also, in order to make the EU efficient but also more transparent and closer to its citizens, it should consider maintaining permanent dialogue with civil society and take into account the thousands of people from new social movements who are discussing another kind of globalisation - a social globalisation, the globalisation of rights.

The EU should work to enhance the role of the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF as economic instruments and the OSCE and Council of Europe as political instruments. The EU should be fully committed to the United Nations as the primary organisation dealing with international relations. The EU should seek its own representation in the UN replacing national representation of states. The EU must uphold the principles of International Justice by supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Sustainability

Global environmental security must be the top priority for European foreign policy. The EU should promote this issue within international society and work on achieving the global implementation of international environmental agreements.

The Kyoto agreement is a turning point in international politics, but it is only the basis for the further development of vital environmental co-operation.

An EU-wide environment tax should be considered and corporations should be held accountable for the environmental damage they cause and responsible for their products from cradle to grave.

Sustainable development is the only way to ensure long-term global progress, and the EU should promote it to replace short-term projecting based on immediate but futile profit.

Science and Research Work

Europe must co-operate with other regions on the exchange of research work. Such co-operation may result in faster and more efficient development and enhance the development of democracy and prosperity around the world.

International Terrorism

The EU must fight national and international terrorism, as this is a threat to democracy, freedom and security. In this view, it is extremely important to promote democratisation, civil society and human development in the countries where international terrorism is most present.

Co-operation with other World Regions

We must pay particular attention to Europe's neighbouring countries, such as the Mediterranean countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and countries with which Europe has strong historical and cultural links, for example those of Latin America.

Enlargement must not result in the creation of a new Iron Curtain across Europe. The EU must recognise our eastern neighbours as a co-operation priority. Increased EU involvement in these countries will support fledgling democracies, prevent the violation of human rights and help develop a free market economy.

The Mediterranean is the EU's Southern frontier. Euro-Mediterranean co-operation under the Barcelona Process should be one of the EU's foreign policy priorities to promote stability in this sensitive region. The European Union must more actively demonstrate its commitment to maintaining stability and promoting democracy, equality, rule of law and fundamental freedoms in all areas in Europe where these are not respected.

Europe must use its strong historical and cultural ties with Latin America to strengthen democratic advancement and social and economic development in this important region. The relationship between the United States and Europe has been an important stabilising force for the past few decades, and this should remain so in the years to come. The Euro-Arab dialogue should be intensified. The EU should build links and co-operate closely with other regional structures such as MERCOSUR, ASEAN and the African Union.

Europe should promote its diverse culture and values internationally. We must respect the values and culture of other peoples and stimulate cultural exchange and co-operation, particularly through civil society and youth. Young people in Europe should be given the opportunities to develop skills and competencies to respond to the challenges of a globalised and competitive world and understand their role in this context.

Conclusions

The recommendations included in this document are the result of three days of work of 210 representatives from 28 countries. If this Youth Convention and our findings are to be valued as anything more than a PR-stunt, we consider it paramount that our recommendations are integrated into the discussions of the working groups of the European Convention.

We commit ourselves to act as champions of this process. We will report back to the young people we represent and reach out to European youth in general in order to ensure that the discussion on the Future of Europe is not reserved for a limited number of European citizens. We believe that this commitment is of major importance and a natural part of the task of being a delegate to the Youth Convention.

In return we demand regular consultation and the direct involvement of young people in the continuing work of the Convention on the future of Europe and the policy-making of the EU institutions in general. The Convention should include a stronger reference on youth in the federal constitution, so that youth issues are taken more seriously, while the main responsibility for youth policy should remain within member states' competencies. The constitutional treaty should recognise the role of non-governmental organisations and the social partners in relation to the EU institutions, so that citizens can better participate in the European Union.

The Convention should involve youth organisations, the youth delegates and other active young people as a resource of innovative ideas, and we make ourselves available and believe that you will approach us in this respect in order to ensure that the ideas, visions, contributions, concerns and interests of youth are put forward.

Furthermore, we believe that the European Convention should report to the Praesidium of the Youth Convention on how our demands are integrated in the drafts of the working groups and treaty drafts. The Youth Convention invites the European Convention to present, before the conclusion of its work, its drafts to a second session of the Youth Convention. To this, we entrust our Praesidium and the European Youth Forum to prepare a second session and to launch an initiative of the Youth Convention to organise a broader and regular consultation of young people and youth associations across Europe for the entire working duration of the European Convention. We hope that the necessary support for this will be provided by the Convention and the EU institutions.