

The European Federalists on the current state of play in the Convention

The Federal Committee of the UEF meeting at Otzenhausen on 17-18 May 2003,

Responsibility of the Convention

1. Welcomes the progress in the European Convention towards presenting a draft constitution in a single document and believes that the experience of conducting the Convention debate in public, including elected parliamentarians from both the European and national parliaments, has been a positive one.
2. Regrets nevertheless that the Convention has failed so far to draft a fully-fledged federal constitution to make the Union more democratic and capable of effective action, able to face the challenges of enlargement and of the new world disorder.
3. Stresses that, if no major changes occur in the current draft and it is not transformed into a true federal constitution, the Union will have missed the opportunity to reform radically.
4. Asks the Convention plenary for a demonstration of leadership, e.g. by indicative votes on controversial topics, to prevent the full Convention from being hijacked by sectional interests or external pressures.

Constitutional Principles

5. Welcomes the prospect of the Union being established on the basis of a single institutional framework with legal personality, but regrets that different mechanisms and procedures are maintained for some policy areas leaving key fields of Union activity largely intergovernmental.
6. Believes that the creation of a transparent competence order and a hierarchy of legal norms is a major step towards making the EU understandable and accountable to its citizens
7. Emphasises that the Charter of Fundamental Rights must be integrated into the Constitution and not only attached as a protocol and that the European citizens must have access to the Court of Justice on the ground of alleged violations of charter rights.

Election of the President of the European Commission by Parliament

8. Welcomes the proposal to let the European Parliament elect the Commission president by simple majority, but insists that the political process of selecting a candidate to this post should go through the European Parliament creating an explicit linkage between the results of the European elections and the choice of Commission president and thus providing the Commission with the democratic legitimacy necessary to make it the government of the Union in all areas. The European Council, conceived as the joint presidency of the Union, should designate the President of the European Commission taking into account the result of the European elections.

Chair of the European Council

9. Condemns the creation of the post of permanent chair of the European Council and, in the name of democracy, simplicity, efficiency and transparency, rejects the proposals to create such a post which would mean trusting the “governance” of the Union in most crucial areas to the European Council and its Chair, which are unable to represent the European interest as a whole and have no European democratic accountability to the European Parliament and so the European citizens.

Co-decision power for the European Parliament

10. Insists that the European Parliament should have full powers of co-decision with the Council on all legislation and on all parts of the budget.

European Foreign Minister

11. Welcomes the suggestion that the Union should have a Vice-President of the European Commission to act as a European Foreign Minister but stresses that in the interests of the efficiency the Foreign Minister and the European Diplomatic service should be fully integrated into the European Commission rather than find itself half in the Commission and half in the Council.

12. Believes that in the interests of democracy, the European Foreign Minister should be nominated by the president of the European Commission and ratified in office by European Parliament and Council. Consequently the European Foreign Minister should be fully accountable to the European Parliament like the rest of the Commission.

Foreign, Security and Defence policy

13. Believes that the crisis in Iraq shows the urgent need for a European capacity for action as an effective political power with appropriate civil and military means and that this can be achieved only when Foreign and Security policy is transferred from the Member States to the Union as an exclusive competence. The EU should become one of the key actors in the multipolar world of the 21st century speaking with one voice in the international institutions, in particular in the Security Council, the United Nations in general, the IMF and the World Bank.

14. Demands that for all non-military aspects of Foreign and Security policy the executive power should lie with the Commission, decisions should be taken by qualified majority in the Council and an effective democratic control by the European Parliament must be guaranteed.

15. Calls for a timetable of no longer than five years for the integration of military aspects of foreign policy into the same system, while allowing a group of member states to proceed with building up common means sooner than that if possible.

Justice and Home affairs

16. Insists that policy in the field of Justice and Home affairs should be made on the basis of proposals from the European Commission subject to co-decision by the Council and the European Parliament, while recognising that much responsibility for its implementation should remain with member states.

Finance

17. Demands that the EU should acquire – like every other level of public power – a taxation power to become independent from the blackmail by individual member states that has often been witnessed during talks on the long-term financial perspective of the EU.

Subsequent amendments to the constitution

18. Believes that the provisions for subsequent amendments to the constitution in the future should include a strong role for the European Parliament in their drafting and approval, e.g. by including the Convention method in the constitution.

19. Demands that the veto of a single member state or a small group of member states for future amendments to the constitution must be abolished.