

# EU Constitution Project Newsletter

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In line with the Federal Trust's aim to enlighten the debate on good governance, this Newsletter reviews the current reform process of the EU from the standpoint of the work of the Federal Trust's project on Constitutionalism, Federalism and the Reform of the European Union (the 'EU Constitution Project'). The Newsletter looks at current developments in and outside the Convention and also covers the UK debate. Finally, it provides information about relevant events and publications.

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## 1. Editorial: Really citizens?

Representative government, together with the rule of law, is a basic political right of citizens in modern democracies. Yet though the EU is responsible for a substantial share of the laws under which they live and spends some at least of the taxes they pay, and the citizens of member states have been designated citizens of the Union, it has not been usual, notably in Britain, to ask how far the Union respects this basic political right. The EC/EU has nevertheless, since its foundation in 1952, moved by steps towards applying it; and perhaps the most important feature of the Convention's Draft Constitution is that it provides for what may be seen as further decisive steps.

Article I-45 affirms that 'the working of the Union shall be founded on the principle of representative democracy' and the Draft does indeed go far towards enactment of legislation and control of the executive by the citizens' directly elected representatives.

Enactment of legislation, including the expenditure side of the budget, by both the European Parliament and the Council is to be the general rule (save, typically, for certain specific exceptions), thus doing much to complete the legislative role of the citizens' representatives, alongside that of the representatives of the states, as is normal in a federal political system.

The Council's legislative role is to be separated from that regarding foreign policy, with the Foreign Affairs Council chaired by the Union's Foreign Minister. Qualified majority voting on legislation in the General Affairs and Legislative



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Council is to be the general rule, though again with certain exceptions; and the Byzantine process of weighting the states' votes, so hard for citizens to understand and so ill-suited to respond to the challenges of enlargement, is replaced by a majority of at least half the member states representing at least three fifths of the Union's population. Thus the Council, in this legislative function, becomes more like a House of the States, acting in ways that citizens can understand - though it seems uncertain whether it will be as open as a democratic legislative chamber should be.

The peculiar arrangement whereby there is to be a Commissioner from each state but only fifteen of them having the right to vote, with the others taking their turn by a system of rotation, has attracted much attention. But the method of appointment of the President and of the other Commissioners is a great deal more relevant to the principle of responsibility of the executive to the citizens' representatives. The Draft states both that 'the Commission shall be responsible to the European Parliament' and that the Parliament 'shall elect the President of the Commission'. The role of the President in the formation of the Commission has also been enhanced, with the right to select the voting Commissioners without any formal constraint, thus becoming more like that of a Prime Minister forming a cabinet; and the role of the Parliament is correspondingly enhanced through its right to approve (or not) the Commission as a whole.

The significance of the Parliament's election of the Commission's President is not crystal clear, for it has to vote for or against a single candidate proposed by the European Council. But the European Council is required to take into account the results of the European Elections and to decide on this candidate 'after appropriate consultations'; and if the candidate is not approved by a majority of the Parliament's members, the European Council must follow the same procedures before proposing a new candidate. Thus the Parliament should be able to convert the procedure into

one of virtual co-decision with the European Council, which should be optimal, given the need for a Commission that is acceptable to the states as well as to the citizens' representatives; and the citizens will be able to see that their votes in the European Elections help to determine the character of the executive as well as of the legislature.

In sum, apart from the sphere of foreign policy and defence, the Draft goes far to apply the principles of representative government; and with the same exceptions, the rule of law, already strong in the fields of Community competence, is in some ways further strengthened. But despite the continued growth of the Union's responsibilities in the CFSP, and although the Draft gives the European Council the power to decide to move to 'a common defence', the system remains in this area predominantly intergovernmental, with unanimity the general rule and a minimal role for the Parliament. The dissension over the Iraq war has prompted the question whether, without a continued process of institutional reform in that sphere too, such intense divergence among the states could inflict irremediable damage on the Union as a whole. My expectation is, however, that the improvements to the Community system that the Draft has proposed will, if adopted by the states, be so clearly more effective and democratic that it will come to prevail in the Union's foreign policy as well; and the people of the Union will become citizens in the full political sense of the word.

Prof John Pinder  
Chairman, The Federal Trust

## 2. The Convention during its final weeks

June saw the formal end of the Convention. The last official meeting was held on Friday 13th and a week later Convention president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing handed the new Constitutional Treaty over to the European Council in Salonika. The two

weeks before 13th June saw the Convention at its busiest. A number of important issues were not resolved and several times it looked as if the Convention would not be able to come up with a single treaty supported by a large consensus of its members.

The biggest obstacle was the rift over the EU's institutional order. The points of disagreement were the composition of the Commission, the election mode for the Commission President, the Presidency of the European Council, the Presidency of the different Council of Ministers formations, the status of the new Foreign Minister and the number of MEPs

The problems were aggravated by a proposal, initiated by the Spanish government with quick support from Austria, Poland and the UK, calling for a halt to some specific changes to the institutional settlement reached at the Nice European Council. The outcome of the Nice negotiations can be described as very cumbersome and complicated and especially the vote allocations in the Council favouring Spain and Poland. During the Convention most Member States, the European Parliament and the Commission supported changes to the Nice agreement.

Another problematic issue was the reference to religion in the Constitutional Treaty. An early draft of the treaty's preamble was changed after pressure from notably the Catholic Church and Christian-Democrat representatives. The final draft refers to Europe's 'religious heritage' without any specific mention of Christianity. This has caused critical comments, not least from the Vatican.

Finally, in a last effort to reach consensus including a satisfactory solution to the institutional dilemma, Convention President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and his two Vice-Presidents, Giuliano Amato and Luc Dehaene, met with representatives from the different Convention delegations (government representatives, MEPs, national parliamentarians and the Commission). These meetings took place on 4 and 6 June, without a fully revised text, thus leaving great control of the debate and

the final compromise to Giscard and the Praesidium. These discussions in the final stage marked a new method of consensus-seeking within the Convention. It resembled very much the so-called 'Confessionals' which are used during the last stages of IGCs. When the negotiations are deadlocked the Head of State/Government of the presiding country seeks bilateral meetings with other governments to try and find an acceptable compromise.

These final discussions proved to be effective, as Giscard was able to present a last minute compromise acceptable to most and the Convention was able to finish its work with a draft Constitutional Treaty supported by a broad consensus. Unanimity was not achieved as a small group of nine Eurosceptic Convention representatives, led by MEP Jens-Peter Bonde and UK MP David Heathcoat-Amory, presented Giscard with a Minority report.

Although the final official day of the Convention, Friday 13th June 2003, was marked by a grand ceremony, it was already clear that some additional sessions would be required to finalise Part III and IV of the draft Constitution. With the consent of Heads of State and Government meeting at Salonika, these additional sessions were finally held on 4th and 9th-10th July. The Salonika European Summit accepted the request for extra time but limited and conditioned the Convention's re-sitting to 'technical' drafting work. However, as one member of the Convention commented, neither the agreements reached on Part III nor the attitude of Conventioneers at the last two sessions could be perceived as the work of technicians.

During the days before the first meeting on 4th July, 1687 amendments were tabled by Convention members. Discussions in the Convention largely concerned Part III of the Constitutional Treaty and specifically the Union's institutions' competences over areas such as a common EU diplomatic service, economic policy co-ordination and public health.

One of the important changes to the draft Constitution introduced during the

9-10th July session was the retaining of national veto over immigration policy. This position had been strongly lobbied by the German Government representative. He in turn had come under strong domestic pressure, notably from Bavarian Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber who threatened to block the ratification of the Constitution in the *Bundesrat*, if unanimity was not preserved.

Similarly, France was able, in the very last minute, to keep its national veto with regards to the 'cultural exception' in external trade - arguably to protect cultural diversity within the Union, especially French music and cinema.

The European Parliament and the representatives from the National Parliaments had also issued a list of Articles which they wanted to see amended. The proposals called for no regression in the existing Community *acquis*, and suggest a number of clarifications to the text of some Articles in Part III, and also proposed changes concerning mainly the extension of qualified majority voting in a number of policy areas (Notably: Article III-196.2(b) in CFSP when initiatives of the Foreign Minister are supported by the Commission, Article III.59-2 in the field of indirect taxation relating to administrative co-operation, tax fraud and tax evasion, and Article III-99(d) relating to protection of dismissed workers). Both National Parliaments and the European Parliament proposed also changes in Part IV, notably regarding the provisions relating to the general treaty amendment procedure.

Only three out of ten proposed article amendments were taken into consideration, none of which included any of the proposals made for extension of qualified majority nor the treaty amendment procedure. The agreed changes included a Declaration on the Creation of a European External Action Service annexed to Part III which establishes one joint service (European External Action Service) composed of officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and of the Commission and staff seconded from national Diplomatic

Services, to assist the future Union Minister of Foreign Affairs. This means that the double hatted Foreign Minister will not have two different advisory bodies, one in the Commission and the other in the Council.

Despite the opposition from some Member States (Germany and Austria) the open-method of co-ordination has been *de facto* included into the Convention Draft. In the areas of public health, industry, social policy and employment (Articles III-174.2; III-175.2; III-102 and III-97 respectively) the Commission has been given the role to promote, encourage and facilitate co-operation among the Member States. The inclusion of these articles, which attribute a significant role to the Commission, mean that at least in these four (significant) policy areas we will have something in the treaty which is an open method of co-operation in all but name.

The Convention also decided to change Article III-208 by adding that the articles regulating enhanced co-operation should also govern the structured co-operation procedure under the Union's Common Foreign and Defence Policy.

Finally, the draft treaty constitutionalised the EU's flag, Beethoven's Ode to Joy as its hymn and 9th May as the Europe Day.

The Convention's final proposal have been submitted to the Italian Presidency, which is due to launch an Intergovernmental Conference on 15 October 2003 to negotiate the future Union's Constitution. Negotiations are expected to run for six months and the Constitutional Treaty is scheduled to be signed by the 25 Member States of the enlarged Union in mid-2004.

## Related Documents

[Part III and Part IV of the Draft Treaty 9 July 2003](#)

[Part I and Part II of the Draft Treaty 20 June 2003 \[CONV 820/03\]](#)

[Reactions to previous version of the Draft Treaty](#)

Amendments tabled by the EP and National Parliaments

Minority Report, 30 May 2003 [CONV 773/03 CONTRIB 347]

## Related articles

[EurActiv](#)

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[Die Welt](#)

[Handesblatt](#)

[The Independent](#)

[Financial Times](#)

## 3. The Salonika Summit

In accordance with the official timetable, Convention President Giscard d'Estaing handed the draft Constitutional Treaty (as well as the Minority report drafted by some Eurosceptic Convention members) to the Heads of State and Government at the Salonika European Summit. The reception of the new draft constitution was positive and the Presidency Conclusions state that the draft constitutional treaty 'marks a historic step in the direction of furthering the objectives of European integration'. Some Member States (Germany and Belgium) announced they could sign the draft as it is, others, like the UK, called it 'a good basis for negotiations' during the forthcoming IGC. From the current member states Austria and Spain raised concerns about the reopening some of the institutional deals reached at the Nice Summit in December 2000. The new Member States were much more cautious in their comments and particularly Poland indicated that it was not content with the new qualified majority procedure which, according to the draft treaty, is due to come into force by 2009. Although the Heads of State and Government will have the chance of reopening any issue they wish during the forthcoming IGC, the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis stated that the

IGC should refrain from doing so. Yet he conceded that it would always be possible to improve the text and finalise certain points. In the aftermath of the Summit particularly Spain, Austria and Poland indicated that they are not content with the new arrangements on qualified majority voting. It is expected that these countries will re-open negotiations on this issue during the forthcoming IGC.

In addition, the European Council agreed on extending the time of the Convention to three additional sessions to finalise the 'technical' work on Part III and IV of the draft Constitution, and also the Heads of State and Government confirmed that the accession states will take part in the conference as full members. The Summit expected a conclusion of the IGC before the accession date of 1 May 2004.

It will be interesting to watch the IGC very closely. This is the first time that an IGC has been so thoroughly 'prepared'. The work of the Convention is likely to have an impact on the agenda and on the way negotiations will be carried out. The European Parliament is expected to have two observers from the two larger political groups while the Liberals will be pressing hard to include one of their members. How much the 'intergovernmental' nature of the IGC will be conditioned by the work of the Convention remains to be seen.

## Related articles and documents

[Salonika Summit Presidency Conclusions](#)

[EU Observer](#)

[EU Observer](#)

[EU Observer](#)

[EurActiv](#)

[EU Observer](#)

## 4. What's in the new Constitutional Treaty Introduction

The achievements of the Convention – especially when measured against the benchmark of the Laeken Declaration – are well known and can be stated quite

simply:

- a. The establishment of a 'single' legal personality for the Union
- b. The overhaul of the existing treaties in such a way as to achieve in large measure the abolition of the 'pillar' structure and the creation of a more simplified treaty structure;
- c. the clarification of competences and the strengthening of the attributed powers principle;
- d. The simplification of instruments as well as law-making and decision-making procedures;
- e. The introduction of a hierarchy of norms relating to legislative and non-legislative instruments
- f. The incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights as a legally binding instrument and the commitment to accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
- g. Increased use of qualified majority voting in at least some areas to restrict decision-making blockages
- h. The shift to a simplified and more effective definition of a qualified majority (fifty percent of Member States representing three fifth of their population) which gets away from the invidiousness associated with the weighting of votes, if not from the power politics of having a larger population (albeit not until April 2009)
- i. The 'ordinary' legislative procedure (i.e. co-decision) and qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers to be the default scenario for decision-making, with the Commission's largely exclusive power of legislative initiative and power to initiate annual and multiannual programming for the Union explicitly preserved;
- j. Increased responsibility of Union institutions in the area of justice and home affairs with the promise of increased policy effectiveness;
- k. Increased involvement of national parliaments, without the creation of a (cumbersome) new institution;
- l. The creation of the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, albeit with rather limited powers and within the framework of what remains a disappointing set of provisions for the Common Foreign and Security Policy;
- m. The achievement of a compromise agreement on the institutional provisions which would address some of the Nice/Laeken *lacunae* in terms of the effectiveness of institutions and the



possibilities of policy-making in an enlarged Union; and

- n. The grouping together of all the external policy provisions

## Structural Overview of the new Treaty

**Part I** is a statement of the principles on which the EU's legal and political order is based. Title I defines the aims and objectives of the Union and Title II deals with fundamental rights (in outline) and citizenship of the Union. Title III lists the Union's exclusive competences (such as monetary policy, common commercial policy, customs union and fishery policy) and those it shares with the member states (e.g. internal market, energy, environment, agriculture, economic, social and territorial cohesion). Title III also includes the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality stating that in areas which are not exclusive EU competences, the Union shall act only and insofar as the objectives of the intended action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States. Title IV explains how the powers of the EU's institutions are distributed. Title V reduces the number and simplifies the procedures of the EU's legal instruments.

**Part II** of the draft treaty contains the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union, essentially as it was agreed in 2000. Title VII guarantees that the Charter only applies to the institutions and to the Member States when they are implementing EU law. It states explicitly that the Charter does not transfer new powers to the European Union. The additions to this Title helped the UK government to overcome its objection to making the Charter legally binding.

**Part III**, far the longest, sets out how the Union's policies function, including detailed provisions on the institutions. It is largely made up of articles drawn from the existing treaties, which have been re-organised and amended to take into account other changes proposed by the draft Constitution, such as the simplification of legal instruments and legislative procedures.

**Part IV** contains general and final provisions, notably procedures for ratification and amendment. It envisages that future treaty reforms will be preceded by a Convention. A future Convention will be convened with a simple majority in the European Council, yet the final adoption of treaty changes remains to be taken unanimously by an IGC.

## Summary of the new institutional provisions

### *The European Council*

For the first time the European Council figures as part of the European Union's institutional framework, beside the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the Commission and the Court of Justice. It will meet quarterly and will provide the EU with general political directions and priorities. It will not adopt legislation and its decisions will normally be taken by consensus. The European Council will be headed by a permanent president or chair, so ending the current six monthly rotation system, which has involved one Member State taking the chair in every formation of the Council/European Council/COREPER.

### *The new President of the European Council*

The European Council will elect its President with a qualified majority vote for a renewable term of two and a half years. The President, who must not hold any national office, will chair and drive forward the work of the European Council. S/he will represent the Union externally on issues concerning the EU's common foreign and security policy, without interfering with the responsibilities of the new Foreign Minister (see Art I-21(2)).

### *The Council of Ministers*

The Council of Ministers will, for each of its formations, consist of a representative of each Member State. The co-decision procedure, based on qualified majority voting, becomes the general mode of decision-making. Only areas which are explicitly mentioned in the Constitution are excepted from this

rule, as for instance the common foreign and security policy.

The General Affairs Council (GAC) will prepare and ensure the follow-up of the European Council's work. It will also assume the role of a legislative council and, jointly with the European Parliament, enact European laws and European framework laws. Additional council formations will be decided on by the European Council. In that context, Member States will send additional 'specialist' ministers.

With the introduction of a President of the European Council the rotating system for council presidencies is abolished. The different council formations will be chaired by Member State representatives on the basis of equal rotation, for periods of at least one year. The Foreign Affairs Council will be chaired by the European Foreign Minister and will thus not be part of the rotation system.

### *European Foreign Minister*

The new European Foreign Minister will assume his/her office in 2006 and will be appointed by the European Council by a qualified majority vote. The Foreign Minister will conduct the Union's common foreign and security policy and contribute to the development of the common foreign policy, which s/he shall carry out as mandated by the European Council. S/he will also chair the Foreign Affairs Council. The new Foreign Minister will become vice-president of the Commission and the present position of Commissioner for External Affairs will cease to exist. When conducting the Union's external relations, the Foreign Minister will be bound by the Commission's procedures.

### *The Commission*

The compromise reached on the Commission's composition will come into place only on 1 November 2009<sup>1</sup>. From that date the Commission College will consist of its President, its Vice-President (the Foreign Minister), and 13 Commissioners. The exact system of rotation will be determined by a European Council decision but Member States will be treated equally in the

determination of the sequence of membership and the time spent by their nationals as members of the College. In addition, there will be non-voting Commissioners, coming from those Member States not represented in the College. The Commission will be held accountable by the European Parliament, which retains the power to force the resignation of the Commission as a whole.

### *The Commission President*

The Commission President will be elected by the European Parliament. Although the EP can only vote on a candidate put forward by the European Council, the latter is obliged to take the outcome of the European elections into account when putting forward its candidate to the Parliament. The Commission President will also be more closely involved in the choosing of his/her College. Each Member State eligible for a Commissioner will put forward a list of three potential candidates (representing both sexes) to the Commission President. From these lists s/he can then appoint the most suitable candidates (there is no obligation on the Commission President to secure gender balance amongst the Commissioners).

### *The European Parliament*

The European Parliament will vote on the European Council's proposal for Commission President and generally hold the Commission accountable. Together with the Council of Ministers it will act as the EU's co-legislator. Its competences will be extended to include the EU's budget as well as justice and home affairs. The total number of MEPs shall not exceed 736. Before 2009 the European Council will decide on a new allocation system of seats in the European Parliament.

### *Qualified majority voting*

Qualified majority voting will become the general procedure of decision-making, with the notable exceptions of taxation, some areas of social policy, and the common foreign and security policy. The European Council may

decide, by unanimity and after due notice, that the ordinary legislative procedure will apply to particular policy areas. In this case national parliaments must be informed – but will not be asked to ratify what would be – in effect – important Treaty changes.

The calculation of a qualified majority has been changed, leaving behind the weighted voting system which has applied since the original Community treaties, and which was significantly complicated by the changes introduced by the Treaty of Nice. A so-called double-majority system is introduced. From 1 November 2009, a qualified majority will need the support of half the Member States representing at least 60 per cent of the EU's population.

### *The role of national parliaments*

All legislative proposals will be forwarded to the national parliaments of Member States. These may send to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission a reasoned objection if they believe that a legislative proposal fails to comply with the principle of subsidiarity<sup>2</sup>. Where at least one third of all the national parliaments<sup>3</sup> claim non-compliance, the Commission will have to review its proposal. After such a review, the Commission may decide to maintain, amend or withdraw its proposal. Regional/subnational parliaments are not given similar rights.

Notwithstanding the welcome which can be given to the Convention as a whole, it is important to recall that the beguiling simplicities of some of the 'improvements' in relation to structure and functioning of the European Union do conceal some concerns in relation to points of detail, specifically:

- a. Continuing problems of complexity, notwithstanding the attempt to simplify; this concern applies especially in relation to the categories of competence and classification of legal instruments contained in Part I of the Constitution;
- b. The failure on the part of the Convention to reflect sufficiently deeply upon the need for reform of the European Court of Justice and generally its relationship to national courts; and

- c. Concerns about the effectiveness of the protection of fundamental rights especially in view of the limited right of individual recourse before the Court of Justice and the complexity of rights protection under Article I-7.

In addition to these concerns, there are some areas where there are some rather infelicitous phrases, many of them probably resulting from the unreasonable speed at which the Convention was forced to conclude its work in June/July 2003 and some of the last minute compromises which were brokered in meetings between the three-man Presidency and the individual component parts of the Convention (national Parliament representatives, national Government representatives, European Parliament representatives). These are areas where the IGC might be able to improve upon the work of the Convention without interfering with its spirit or the balance contained in its results. These include:

- a. The turgid and clumsy wording of the Preamble and certain other provisions;
- b. A certain degree of contradiction within the terms of some provisions; e.g. in Article I-3(2) and (3), within three lines the Constitution refers to both free competition within a single market and the 'social market economy';
- c. The bizarre retention in the supposedly unified 'Union' of the languages of the 'Community way' in Article I-1, resulting from the insistence of certain Member States on the removal of the word 'federal' from the text at all costs; and
- d. It is not always clear when the new form of qualified majority voting is to start taking effect. In the case of enhanced co-operation (Article I-43), the new form of qualified majority appears to take effect immediately upon entry into force of the Treaty - rather than in 2009. Enhanced co-operation has proven difficult to launch in the past, but the shift to the new style of QMV could be particularly significant in the field of EMU (Article III-84a(2)). In any case, it will be vital that the IGC achieve legal certainty in this area.

Of course, no doubt any observer of the new texts, however sympathetic to the underlying aims of the European Union and the bona fide attempts of the Convention to fulfil the Laeken mandate, can find more profound problems with the draft Treaty/Constitution. This

observer would highlight in particular certain lost opportunities of the Convention:

- a. Weaknesses in relation to the 'social constitution' of the Union; and
- b. The failure adequately to 'mainstream' provisions on democracy into the Convention.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The European Council, with a qualified majority, can postpone the changes for a further three years; meaning that they may only come into force in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The exact wording of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are laid out in Article I-9.

<sup>3</sup> Because of the insistence of bicameral countries such as Germany, every Member State holds two votes which it can distribute to its national parliament(s) as it wishes.

## Related Documents

[Part III and Part IV of the Draft Treaty 9 July 2003 \[CONV 848/03\]](#)

[Part I and Part II of the Draft Treaty 20 June 2003\[CONV 820/03\]](#)

[Reactions to previous version of the Draft Treaty \[CONV 821/03\]](#)

[Amendments tabled by the EP and National Parliaments](#)

[Minority Report, 30 May 2003 \[CONV 773/03 CONTRIB 347\]](#)

## 5. Outside the Convention The Italian Presidency

Italy took over the EU Presidency on 1st July. During the first week, Italy published its priorities for the forthcoming six months. Naturally, the Intergovernmental Conference is top of the agenda. The Italian Ambassador in a speech at the Centre for European Policy Studies stated that the aim is to conclude the IGC by the end of this year.

One potentially contentious issue might have already been settled accidentally by the Italian Prime Minister. The unfortunate remarks he made during his Presidency presentation speech at the European Parliament, suggesting a German MEP for the role of a concentration camp guard in an Italian film, has meant that some countries might rethink their position on the principle of rotating European

Council presidency. According to the EU Observer, some diplomats are admitting that the chances of having a loose cannon on the deck of the EU are just too great in an enlarged EU.

Other issues on the agenda of the Italian presidency include a focus on the economic downturn, the security of Europe's borders and relations with EU's neighbours and overseas partners.

## Related articles and web sites

[EurActiv](#)

[EU Observer](#)

[Italian Presidency](#)

[Intergovernmental Conference](#)

## CAP reform

EU agriculture ministers gathered in Luxembourg for over two weeks finally agreeing on a compromise on 26th June. The most controversial issue, which was the reason for the strong French opposition to the reform proposal, was the decoupling of agricultural aids from production levels as suggested by the European Commission. French opposition has traditionally been due to the decrease in direct support for French farmers (which is the largest among all Member States) which such decoupling would cause. Because of the persistent pressure from the French government, and support by Germany, the Commission had to water down its original proposals.

Key points of the agreement reached are:

- a single farm payment system which will no longer be linked to the volume of production;
- subsidies will be linked to the respect of environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards;
- a strengthened rural development policy with more EU money;
- the single farm payment system will enter into force in 2005, but Member States can delay this to 2007;

The agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler was content with the outcome of the negotiations: the EU's farm policy will become more effective and the bulk of our direct payments will no longer be linked to production.

## Related articles

[EurActiv](#)

[EU Observer](#)

[European Commission: Agriculture Compromise](#)

## Enlargement

Both, Poland and the Czech Republic held referendums on EU accession in June. EU membership was favoured by a large majority in both countries (77.45 per cent and 77.33 per cent respectively). Turnout in the Czech Republic was very high: 90 per cent - compared to Poland's 58.85 per cent.

The prospects for the forthcoming referendum in Estonia (14th September) are far less promising. The latest opinion polls show that only 48 per cent of voters are in favour of EU accession whilst 45 per cent are opposed with 7 per cent undecided. This represents a sharp drop in the pro-EU vote compared to 63 per cent in favour of membership after the Lithuanian referendum in May.

The leaders of the Western Balkans came together for a Summit confirming their pledge to become full members of the EU. Their will to join was greeted by the Union, with Foreign Relations Commission Chris Patten describing the region as one of the missing pieces in the EU's jigsaw.

## Related articles

[Euractiv](#)

[EU Observer](#)

[EU Observer](#)

## 6. Events

'Encouraging Democracy and Stakeholder Participation in the English Regions', Launch of Working Group Report

Portcullis House, London, 21 July 2003  
14.30-17.00

Launched by Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP, Minister of State for Local and Regional Government

Info: [ulrike.rub@fedtrust.co.uk](mailto:ulrike.rub@fedtrust.co.uk)

Main Developments in European Integration and Community Policies

Maastricht, 8-12 September 2003

Info: <http://www.europeanvoice.com/eu/info.asp?id=523>

Die Verflochtenheit und Verflechtung von äußerer und innerer Sicherheit.

Vienna, 14-16 September 2003

Info: <http://www.oaip.at/Termine/Kalender>

UACES 33rd Annual Conference and 8th Research Conference. The European Union: The First Ten Years, The Next Ten Years?

University of Newcastle, 2-4 September 2003

Conference includes panels on the Convention and the 2004 IGC. Confirmed speakers include the Head of the Convention Secretariat, Sir John Kerr.

Info: [UACES](http://www.uaces.org) or email [admin@uaces.org](mailto:admin@uaces.org)

Die EU im Vorwärtsgang: Konsequenzen für die EWR und EFTA Staaten

Reykjavík, 18-19 September 2003

Info: [http://www.era.int/www/de/c\\_14614.htm](http://www.era.int/www/de/c_14614.htm)

Umwelthaftung in der EU

Exeter, 19-20 September 2003

Info: [http://www.era.int/www/de/c\\_14363.htm](http://www.era.int/www/de/c_14363.htm)

Theories and Research Design in the Field of EU Studies

University of Aarhus, Denmark, 3 - 14 August

Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark

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