



## INTERGROUP

### EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
10 MARCH 2004, EP STRASBOURG, 16H

## **Which EP actions to support the European Constitution?**

The meeting is chaired by Jo LEINEN (PSE,D).

In his introduction he reminds his colleagues that the discussion on the agenda is about the written declaration on the constitution adopted by the European Parliament. This would be the message : « We have been part of the consensus of the Convention, we stick to it », which would also have a positive effect for the electoral campaign to come. This would however lead to the difficulty on what to vote, ie the first and second parts or the four parts all together, including therefore the much criticised third and fourth parts.

As regards the Gil-Robles/Tsatsos' report on the result of the IGC, the same difficulty arises and it is important to get a large majority on such a crucial issue in the Parliament.

Andrew DUFF recalls the fact that the Parliament has already had three votes on the Constitution. As regards the Gil-Robles/Tsatsos' report, he fears a fall of support for the project if the Parliament is asked to vote the text without any discussion. He agrees onto launching the debate in his own parliamentary group but notes that all groups are divided on the question, therefore leading to major risks of failure.

Pervenche BERES stresses that she accepted to sign the declaration also only to support the two first parts of the text. She notes that Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the president of the Convention, who was in the parliament on Tuesday, admitted himself that the last part was not perfect. The clivage between opponents and supporters of the text is also existing among the French majority party. A vote is however important to show the Parliament's motivation.



For Carlos CARNERO (PSE-E), the Parliament needs to support the Constitution and the Convention's work presented in Thessaloniki. A problem would appear if an agreement would be reached between the Heads of State and Governments in April and the Parliament would arrive to the elections without a position. He suggests that the proposition of declaration should not be tabled by just one MEP, but the President of the Parliament, signatories of the political groups and of the Constitutional Affairs Committee. There will in any case not be unanimity but a large majority has to be reached to give political weight to the text and show the Parliament has a strong position.

For Gérard ONESTA (Verts, F): we need a final political act on this subject to end up the legislature. If the Parliament has to vote on the four parts, no strong majority will be reached. He agrees with the proposition to table the proposed declaration by as many members of Parliament (including Mr Pat Cox) as possible.

Mr LEINEN reminds the assistance that we encounter a speculative phase, as many MEPs hesitate to sign a declaration given an agreement might be reached at the next European Council, end of March. As it is likely that no agreement will be reached even in May, a strong position by the Parliament will be awaited by the public opinion. As regards the Gil-Robles/Tatsos report, an introductory explanation is needed to have it accepted : it could express a support to the Convention's work. The difficulty with the reference to the Thessaloniki text is that it also includes the third and fourth parts.

Gérard ONESTA recalls the fact that a constitution should give the rules of the game, while the third part presents the political fields, which are in no constitutional text. Andrew DUFF however admits it is a « package deal ».

Jo LEINEN notes that at the moment there is resistance to the Gil-Robles/Tsatsos in all groups. If no result is reached at the end of the month European Council, an action will in any case be necessary, whatever the form. He sums up the debate stressing that one solution could be to have a declaration adopting the first and second part with an explanation noting the existence of the third and fourth parts. Maybe some national parliaments would then accept to vote the declaration as well.

Andrew DUFF finally considers a larger consultation of the colleagues is necessary. For Carlos CARNERO an agreement within the political groups is needed to escape complete division in the plenary.