

The draft European Constitution

Manifesto (8 March 2004)

Since its inception in 1947, ELEC has worked for European economic and political integration, for close cooperation between the European Union and European countries which have chosen to remain outside this movement, and for a dialogue with the rest of the world.

In this capacity, it has consistently encouraged initiatives promoting the integration and consolidation of the European community and has endeavoured to play a positive role vis-à-vis policy-makers in periods of crisis or difficulties.

With this in mind, it took an active part in the work of the Convention, and on several occasions expressed its opinions on the contents of the draft Constitution.

In spite of the gaps and insufficiencies of the text submitted to the Inter-Governmental Conference, ELEC has taken the view that the advances in this draft, being the outcome of a wide consultation, were deserving of its support.

However, not only has the IGC failed to reach agreement on two important points of the document (the voting system and the composition of the Commission), but it has also reduced the scope of certain proposals, most notably by rejecting the application of majority voting in the areas of social security and criminal justice.

Apart from the damaging consequences of this impasse for present and future citizens of the enlarged Europe, the absence of rapid agreement on the draft Constitution will weaken its impact, whilst at the same time reducing the appeal and significance of next June's European Parliament elections.

ELEC asks therefore that the draft Constitution be approved as swiftly as possible in the version finalised by the Convention, without amendments aimed at reducing its scope, and urges the European Parliament to reiterate its support for the Convention's text.

In reality, the work of the IGC has also highlighted the limitations and shortcomings of the intergovernmental method prevalent within the Council, which has itself failed somewhat in its avowed claim to represent the European common good.

The IGC has also clearly demonstrated that the controversies on the institutional aspects mask two opposing ideas about the future of Europe, one based on the continuation of the process of consolidation and the other on the gradual transformation of the European Union into a free trade zone.

Therefore, in the light of this new situation, which carries with it the seeds of the destruction of the European Union, ELEC feels compelled to reaffirm solemnly its commitment to European integration and its fundamental content.

ELEC especially considers that, in order to be credible and recognised as such by its citizens, the enlarged European Union must in the medium term:

- ◇ become a genuine political Europe capable of fulfilling its role in the world, which requires sufficient resources for the Union to be able to embrace its international responsibilities and to have a foreign policy;

- ◇ have a system of effective and democratic governance which must be reflected in its institutions and in the sharing of power between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament;
- ◇ possess a swift and transparent decision-making process;
- ◇ have legitimacy and democratic control.

For these reasons, ELEC supports the implementation of the Community method based on a decision-making process that falls within the scope of the treaties (most notably, the institutional triangle and the role of the European Court of Justice), which has proved its effectiveness in the consideration and defense of the common good, and whose importance can only increase in an enlarged Europe.
