



Background - the Context of the Convention on the Future of Europe

The Convention on the Future of Europe was launched by Heads of State at the Nice Summit in December 2000 to prepare for changes to the Treaties in 2004. The idea is to bring together in one transparent, simplified and accessible document the various treaties which make up the constitutional framework of the European Union. It was also intended to encourage debate across Europe so that changes to EU structures are based on public consensus.

Militarisation

The European Union was set up to bring peace to Europe.

Military matters were not part of the negotiations or the organisational structure of the European Union until relatively recently.

The Convention met at a time when security matters were high on the political agenda as a result of world events.

The Convention was more open as a process than many other negotiations towards change in the European Union. This openness was of benefit to lobby groups. This includes the European arms industry.

The open pressure by the United States on the European Union Member States to increase military capability and military spending has had an impact on these discussions.

The Laeken Declaration

- The Laeken Summit of December 2001 set up the Convention on the Future of Europe and posed a list of questions which the Convention was to address:
 - What is Europe's role in a globalised world?
 - How to bring citizens closer to the European institutions.
 - How to organise politics and the European political area in an enlarged Union.
 - Consideration of adoption of a constitutional text and what the features of such a text might be.

The Convention

- Worked from February 2002 to July 2003.
- Consisted of representatives of the governments of the Member States, national parliaments, the European Parliament and the Commission. Accession countries had equal parliamentary and government representation but were not able to prevent consensus.
- Representatives of the Economic and Social Committee, the trade unions, the employers' organisations and the Committee of the Regions had observer status.
- A Forum for civil society input was set up: members received information on the Convention's proceedings and were able to make contributions.
- All meetings were public and all official documents accessible to the public.
- In June 2003 the Convention made recommendations to the Thessaloniki Summit of the Heads of State/Government of Member States.
- The Summit agreed to set up an Intergovernmental Conference to consider, possibly amend and agree the recommended new Constitutional Treaty.

Intergovernmental Conference 2003

- Heads of State of the Member States will decide on whether to accept, to amend or to reject the Convention's recommendations.
- Decisions made here will result in changes to the Treaties.

