



THE FUTURE OF EUROPE DEBATE

This debate 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 encourage debate across Europe so that changes to EU structures are based on public consensus. Low voter turnout in European elections, protests at European summits and the Irish 'No' vote to the Nice Treaty all contribute to this new concern for public opinion. The EU faces three challenges of enlargement, globalisation and low public confidence. The Future of Europe debate aims to address the democratic deficit and involve citizens in the European process.

QCEA Spiritual Values and Citizenship project:

To make an input into the Future of Europe debate, QCEA has decided to consult Quakers across Europe by running seminars.

The seminars will take place from March to December 2002, with a conference in October.

The feedback from these seminars and the conference will be used to produce a report entitled a 'Quaker View of Europe'.

This report will be used as a submission to the Convention, but will also prove to be a useful resource for Quakers and for QCEA.

A short initial submission to the Convention, based on the 'Quaker Vision of Europe', was made in March 2002.

Laeken Declaration

- Laeken Summit of Dec. 2001 produced this declaration.
- Poses a list of questions:
 - 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.
- Set up the Convention on the Future of Europe to come up with answers to these questions.

Convention

- Consists of representatives of the governments of the member states, national parliaments, the European Parliament and the Commission. Accession countries have equal parliamentary and government representation but are not able to prevent consensus.
- Representatives of the Economic and Social Committee, the trade unions, the employers' organisations and the Committee of the Regions have observer status.
- Will meet for one year, starting 28th Feb 2002.
- All meetings are public and all official documents accessible to the public.
- A Forum for civil society input has been set up: members receive information on the Convention's proceedings and are able to make contributions.
- At the end of a year the Convention will make recommendations to the Intergovernmental Conference on how to change the Treaties.

Intergovernmental Conference 2004

- Heads of State of the member states will decide on whether to accept the Convention's recommendations.
- Decisions made here will result in changes to the Treaties.