



Action Points

QCEA's Interest in the Process of Ratification

QCEA is not making the process of ratification a major programme area. We are, however, keen to keep informed of what is happening with the process and will continue to cover relevant issues in *Around Europe*.

The ratification process is now very much a Member State issue. In other words, the debate will be progressing at national level. It is important for this debate to keep a focus on the Constitutional Treaty and not to change its focus to national policy or party political issues.

How can you keep QCEA informed?

Please tell us what is happening in your country or region. We would be keen to receive information about the campaigns and the arguments on which they are being fought. We would be delighted to see what press coverage the issue is receiving - at national, regional and local level and whether the press is covering the issues of the Constitutional Treaty or making it a vehicle for other debates.

If we get this kind of information from a variety of different places and sources, it will enable us to provide additional analysis, either in the form of an additional briefing paper, a page on our website where we can collect the material, and/or articles in *Around Europe*. It will also alert us to issues which are being raised beyond the ones we are focusing on and to support lobbying efforts here in Brussels, on topics which Friends and others are undertaking at national level.

What you can do to engage in the debate

In countries where there is going to be a referendum

Once the referendum campaigns get under way, you can get involved. It may even be useful to start before the official campaigns get under way as some governments may deliberately curtail debate by having a very short time between the announcement of the referendum date and the question to be asked and the actual vote.

You can participate in or arrange debates in your local area where MEPs and national politicians can be invited to explain their position on the Constitutional Treaty, the reasons for their position and where the public can voice their questions and views.

You can write to your local, regional or national newspaper about the issues and encourage a debate on this there.

You can write to your MP, your MEP and to the relevant Minister in your government about the issues which concern you in the Constitutional Treaty. The questions we would suggest raising are not only questions about the issue but also whether there is, in the view of the politician you are writing to, any scope in changing the Constitutional Treaty on the subject of your concern in the case of non-ratification and whether they would support that.

The European Commission has launched an initiative to get 1000 local, regional or national debates about the Constitutional Treaty going in all the Member States. You can look at the dedicated website of this campaign at http://europa.eu.int/futurum/1000debates/index.cfm?page=dsp_content_page&lng_id=2. There you can register any debate you are organising on this subject.

There, you can also download a power point presentation which provides a brief outline of the Constitutional Treaty. It may be difficult to use this without additional commentary but together with a text of the Constitutional Treaty this is a good basis for further study.

In countries where there is not going to be a referendum or where the decision about a referendum has not been made yet

If the decision about whether there should, or should not be a referendum is still to be taken, then you can write to MPs, government ministers and the press about that question and put your views. Whether or not this is likely to have an impact will depend on whether a referendum is possible or not in your country.

If the decision has been made **not** to hold a referendum, then engagement with parliamentarians who will make the decision on ratification on behalf of the population, is even more important. Short letters, setting out the key issues you are concerned about within the Constitutional Treaty will be most successful.

How do you answer the difficult question?

One of the most difficult questions from those who would favour the ratification might be: What about the enormous amount of time and money invested in the process so far. Do you think this should all be wasted?

That is a fair question. However, if you really believe that it would be wrong to agree the Constitutional Treaty as it stands, then it might be worth wasting all this money and starting again, if you think that a different or new process is likely to get to a better result. The Constitutional Treaty as it stands is very difficult to change once ratified. Each change would have to be proposed by a Convention, agreed by an Intergovernmental Conference and ratified by each Member State.

One of the most difficult questions from those who are against ratification might be: Why does the EU need a Constitutional Treaty at all?

That is a fair question. The consolidation of the existing treaties, and even the integration into a new treaty of new measures and elements which are necessary in order to make the EU of 25 or more Member States function, could have been achieved with another type of Treaty or another consolidation of Treaties as has happened before. However, that would have led to continuing confusion and an increasing lack of transparency.

A question we have been asked which really goes in the same direction is: Why does the EU need a flag and an anthem, a European Day, a motto and a currency? The short answer is that in principle it doesn't need any of them but in fact, and with or without the

Constitutional Treaty, it has all of them. And all, bar the currency, are observed/used in all the Member States.

There will be other difficult questions. We would like to encourage you to send them to us as you get asked them, with or without your answer. We would then compile a list of them and suggest some factual information that could be used to address them.