

Guiding Principles for the Work of the Convention

At its congress in Bath, UK October 2002 the ELDR Party considers that:

The Convention on the Future of Europe has a historic opportunity: to lay the foundations for a genuinely democratic European Union, able to meet the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow. In today's world, where the globalisation of economies and where international concern about the environment, poverty, and crime raise the challenge of establishing global democratic structures, only a united and enlarged Europe can meet the needs of its citizens and contribute to peace and stability.

These goals can only be achieved on the basis of an ambitious reform of its institutions and procedures. The Union needs a democratic, open and transparent decision-making system, accountable to its citizens, to reconnect the peoples of Europe with the decisions taken in their name.

This future Europe should have the peoples of Europe at its heart, with a strengthened conception of European citizenship, carrying real rights and obligations, and based on our shared common European values. For the Union to attract the loyalty and support of its citizens, it must be credible in its policy, efficient in its actions, and successful in its results.

This is the challenge facing the Convention on the Future of Europe today.

We as European Liberal Democrats therefore call on the Convention on the Future of Europe to rise to this challenge, by drafting a genuine European Constitutional Treaty incorporating the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Liberals call on the 2004 IGC to implement the Convention proposals agreed to with broad consensus respecting the democratic process.

As European Liberal Democrats we believe that the following are essential elements of a European Federal Constitution:

The government of the Union must be based on the principles of democracy, subsidiarity, transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

The Constitution should define the fundamental rights of EU citizens, a system of distribution of competencies between the European and national levels, and the role and powers of the European institutions. to and implement the Kyoto Protocol or similar measures, which we find indispensable with a view to ensuring a better environment for all."

The Union of tomorrow must be based on decentralisation and diversity, not on petty bureaucracy and over-regulation. Its institutions must be

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capable of acting effectively, and able to meet the expectations of the people of Europe for a future based on freedom, security, solidarity, prosperity, and sustainable development.

Three essential elements of a federal European Constitution:

Fundamental rights: the Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms should be made legally binding and should be at the heart of the Constitution.

Competencies: a more effective and transparent delineation of competencies, between those which are exclusive competencies of the Union, those which are shared between the European and national levels, and those which remain the competence of the member states. This should be based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Decision-making: decision-making procedures should be simplified, and majority voting in the Council should be the rule. All legislation should be subject to co-decision between the Parliament, as the chamber of the people, and the Council, as the chamber of the States. The three-pillar system should be replaced by an integrated constitutional order, with full democratic control over the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Justice and Home Affairs.

As European Liberal Democrats we strive for a democratic and accountable institutional structure that defines:

European Parliament: remains the only directly democratically elected body, representing the people. The Parliament should be given full budgetary competence and should have co-decision on all European legislation and general oversight in all areas where the Union is competent.

Council: should meet in public when acting as a legislative body according to the principles of openness and transparency.

Commission: should be the Executive of the Union. The Commissioners should be individually fully accountable to Parliament. Members of the Commission will be selected according to competence, and their nomination will be subject to approval of the European Parliament. The President of the Commission is elected by Parliament.

Court of Justice: all matters within the competence of the Union should be subject to the Court of Justice, and the Court should become a genuine Constitutional Court.

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