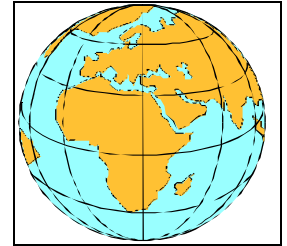




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“Liberate work by removing its tax burden and finance social security by taxing the consumption of goods, which most often are produced by machine.”

ELECTRONIC VIVANT- EUROPE

N° 49 (November 2007)

VIVANT- EUROPE is member of The PERMANENT FORUM OF EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY and takes part in its work

EDITORIAL

1. The Forum inaugurates its NEWSLETTER with this first issue. In case you wish to subscribe, please do click on "NEWSLETTER" on the left-hand column and introduce the e-mail address to which it should be sent. Thank you. **Three numbers of this newsletter were already published.**

2. The « PERMANENT FORUM OF EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY » was born in September 1995 **(history and objective)**

Forum's NEWSLETTER nr 2007-01

The IGC 2007 and the Reform Treaty

It is well known now that, following [the final conclusions of the European Council of Brussels](#), an intergovernmental conference [\(IGC\) began on July](#)



[23, 2007](#). This IGC received a particularly precise mandate to write a Reform Treaty modifying the Treaties currently in force. Although, by the many footnotes introduced by several Member States, it may seem that the "carrots are cooked" and that there is nothing any more to negotiate, this opinion is not exact. It is enough to convince one-self to attentively read the recent [note published by "European Policy Centre"](#) which underlines the difficulty of the ratification processes to come. This is why the Forum has, as of 6 July 2007, published its [official statement n°2007-04](#) in which it insists that, during the IGC negotiations, two minimal provisions are adopted:

1. Inclusion, in the Reform Treaty, of a clause imposing that in the future a Pan-European consultation must precede the ratification, by the Member States, of any later amendments to this Treaty.
2. The addition of a provision making possible that a Pan-European consultation be organized within the framework of participatory democracy so as to mobilise the European citizens' opinion on a political vision for the Union and improve the Union's governance.

The AGORA initiative

[The Citizens' AGORA](#) is an initiative of the European Parliament on a proposal of Gerard ONESTA, Vice-president.



The networks of organisations of civil society were invited, on June 25, 2007, in the European Parliament by Gerard ONESTA, to promote the organisation of a structure of dialogue between civil society and the EP. It is an initiative of participatory democracy.

The AGORA will be tested twice in the months to come. A first session is to concentrate on constitutional affairs, (understand the process of modifying the treaties following the European Council of June the 21, & 22 2007), while the second one will be on climatic change.

The first session will be held on November 8-9, 2007 and will bring together approximately 500 participants, and the second one at the beginning of 2008, but the date is not fixed yet today. After these two sessions, the EP will decide if it prolongs or not the AGORA. Civil society thus may find it beneficial to work with Gerard Onesta and his colleagues to make a success of the experiment. Thus let us all prepare seriously this first meeting by taking due account of the context in which it is placed.

The European Council of June 2007 in Brussels caused various reactions. Therefore the EP proposes to civil society **to co-write an opinion on the work of the IGC**. This IGC will be very short and its mandate is very precise ([see here the conclusions of this Council](#)). It will probably deliver its conclusions at mid-October 2007 or at the end of the Portuguese Presidency in December 2007. Now, as on the basis of the treaty currently in force, the EP has to express its opinion (a no constraining opinion!!) on the conclusions of any IGC, the EP proposes to associate civil society in the drafting of its opinion that it intends to publish 3 to 4 weeks after the end of the IGC work. This first experiment of the AGORA thus will allow a first exercise of participatory democracy as complementary to the European representative democracy.

The practicalities of the meeting are not yet definitively decided but Gerard Onesta thinks of a plenary assembly on November 8, 2007 followed, in the afternoon, by 5 workshops. The drafting, by a rapporteur, of the workshop's conclusions (a A4 page recto/verso) during the evening (or even the night), the debate and finalisation of these conclusions during the morning of November 9, 2007

and their final presentation to the plenary assembly for approval during the afternoon. A press conference is foreseen at the end of this first AGORA session.

The workshops will debate over the following topics:

1. Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights
2. Missions of the Union and policies
3. Tools and functioning of the institutions (how to make with the well known article I-47 and other things like that)
4. New stages, roles and roadmap
5. Borders of the Union, the neighbourhood policy, EU enlargement, the rest of the world.

Exchanges will take place with civil society organisations before and during the summer holidays. A second preparatory meeting of the session is planned on September 11, 2007.

The FORUM intends to prepare this first AGORA session very seriously. It is one of the essential reasons for which it decided to inaugurate its newsletter in order to:

- Disseminate as largely as possible information that it collects within civil society, and
- Build together an action plan and proposals to be put on the agenda of the first AGORA initiative that the European Parliament organises on November 8-9, 2007.

2. The « **PERMANENT FORUM OF EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY** » was born in September 1995 from an idea from Virgilio Dastoli, secretary-general of the International European Movement (ME-I), a non-governmental organisation founded in 1948 at the “Congress of The Hague”. This idea was taken up in a Call launched to a great number of NGOs and trade union organisations by the Conference of the presidents of the national councils of the International European Movement in Bonn on September 21, 1995.

The FORUM contributed, by its States General in Göttingen (March 1998), to the preparation of the second Congress of The Hague organised in May 1998 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first Congress of The Hague and the foundation of the ME-I.

At the beginning of the work of the Intergovernmental Conference that led to the Treaty of Amsterdam, the FORUM launched, on the initiative of its Reporter, Raymond Van Mermen, a collective reflection concerning the preparation of a Charter of the basic rights in the European Union. This reflection resulted in the draft of a Charter that was adopted at the Capitol in Rome in March 1997 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. The FORUM thus largely contributed, on the one hand, to the coordination of the civil society’s initiatives in the framework of the Convention that worked out the EU Charter of the basic rights and, on the other hand, to the reflections on the EU enlargement and new type of governance.

The FORUM - actively present at the European Councils of Turin (March 1996), Florence (June 1996), Amsterdam (June 1997) and Luxembourg (November 1997) - took an active part in the

mobilisation of the civil society at Tampere (December 1999) and was at the origin of the Civil Society Symposium held during the Nice Council (December 2000). It actively contributed to the Citizens' Assembly held on December 13-15, 2001 by coordinating its work in partnership with the NGO-Platform of the social sector.

In the context of the discussions over the deepening and enlargement of the European Union, it became imperative to make hear the voice of the civil society and, in particular, to take part in the debate on the methods and procedures to structure the dialogue between the European institutions and the organisations and networks of the European civil society.

In 2003, many people, individuals or associations, who had worked within the first FORUM born in 1995 and wished to pursue its objectives, estimated that the FORUM was to be an active partner within this dialogue and therefore that it was necessary to proceed to a formal act of Re-foundation of the initiative begun in 1995. The Re-foundation was embodied in the form of a European grouping called **PERMANENT FORUM OF EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY** - in short « **THE FORUM - EEIG** ». [The full text of its statute is registered IN FRENCH and is available here](#). Its translation into English is under process.

Each partner of the FORUM exerts, in his/her country, on a purely individual basis or in the name of an association, voluntary actions having objectives close to those undertaken by the first FORUM, in different societal areas but likely to supplement each other. They want to continue taking their own and distinct actions and do not wish to constitute a new organisation that supplants them. But they wish also to create bonds of co-operation that enable them to carry out together specific objectives that they could only with difficulty reach separately and, by doing this, to develop their activities in a more effective and more convenient way.

OBJECTIVES

The FORUM aims to produce and communicate information, to be a place of dialogue and reflection and to promote actions of all kinds in order to realise:

- a) An active European citizenship,
- b) A new form of governance that encourages better synergies between the European institutions and the civil society,
- c) A representative and participatory democracy that respects gender equality and the principle of subsidiarity.

The FORUM encourages the active participation of men and women in Europe, through their associations, in the construction of a European Union based upon the values of peace, democracy, respect for the human being, equality between men and women, solidarity and mutual recognition of cultural diversity, in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The FORUM contributes to co-ordinate, at the European level, the local actions of the organised civil society. It is committed to reinforcing the presence of the civil society in the Central and Eastern European countries and in the Mediterranean area.

SITE The documents published by the FORUM and its official statements are available in German, English and French languages on the website: <http://www.forum-civil-society.org>