

ERC NEWSLETTER 02/ JAN 16, 2003
<http://www.european-referendum.org>

Dear friends,
this ERC-newsletter will be published on a regularly basis.

The time from 24th of December 2002 to the first week of 2003 was used to recover and taking a break of the very intensive work in the previous weeks. But anyway there where some activities before, during and after that period I want to report about.

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AND HERE ARE THE NEWS:

- 1.) Activities during EU summit in Copenhagen
- 2.) Initiative for a fair referendum 2003-2004
- 3.) Both sceptical: pro EU and EU critical groups
- 4.) NL - Parliament "declares wish" for referendum
- 5.) D - Several demands for referendum
- 6.) I&R working group with Convention members
- 7.) Bratislava - Contributions available
- 8.) Referendum Bus Tour through Europe
- 9.) Porto Allegre - democracy international represented
- 10.) Frankfurt office situation
- 11.) Next steps

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1.) ACTIVITIES IN COPENHAGEN

We had the chance to use our trip to Copenhagen in the framework of the EU summit in December 2002 to present the campaign on several forums.

a) "YOUROPA - YOUTH FORUM" - This was the official follow up of the Brussels Youth Conventions organized by the Danish presidency. We were invited to participate in a panel: "The Enlargement, the EU institutions and a charter on fundamental rights - Speakers: Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Danish MEP and EP representative in the European Convention and Giovanni Grevi, the European Policy Centre and Thomas Rupp, European Referendum Campaign."

b) Than there was the "ALTERNATIVE SUMMIT" organised by the June- Movement. The EU critical Copenhagen Declaration was drafted were we could add a paragraph concerning the topic of Direct Democracy. To avoid misunderstandings: This refers to the work of "democracy international" which wants to improve democracy in general. Not to the ERC which only deals with a constitutional referendum: "It must be possible for the people to actively influence and shape the future of Europe from bottom up, therefore necessary instruments such as a right of initiative have to be installed at all levels."

Therefore please see new FAQ (No 1)
at http://www.european-referendum.org/up/up_faq.html

c) During the "NGO-FORUM" we had a stand which was run by the Danish ERC group "Kampagnen for Europæisk Folkeafstemning" and Ronald Pabst from the Frankfurt office. They managed to spread lots of cucumber postcards and collected about 400 signatures for the ERC Appeal.

We also had an ERC-presentation on the NGO forum, which was not very well attended (about 15 people) but it was followed by a very interesting discussion about the objectives of democracy international which - concerning the audience - should be much more far-reaching than just the ERC. And we should deal much more with criteria for democracy in general. We told them, that this is planned but that we (have to) concentrate in the moment on the ERC

read more: <http://www.european-referendum.org/up/up10.html>

d) Furthermore we had the opportunity to present and discuss the campaign with the "PEOPLES MOVEMENT". And finally we took the chance to visit the "TEAM BOARD MEETING". Here the support of the campaign is growing. One of the conclusions of the meetings was, that it is not enough to just demand a referendum. BUT to demand a FAIR referendum. Because a referendum which is biased from the beginning will not match any democratic standards and therefore will be counterproductive.

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2.) INITIATIVE FOR A FAIR REFERENDUM 2003-2004

Henrik Dahlsson, Secretary General of TEAM, took the initiative to start a project which will monitor the coming accession referenda. This is also a very interesting item for OUR campaign: His idea is to create an "International Monitoring Referendum Group (IMRG)" which would be an international panel of referendum experts, which could consist of about 10-15 experts, both scientists and activists, all over Europe. They should define criteria for fair referenda and demand the application of these criteria during the up-coming referenda. Democracy international is very interested in participating in this project. Also IRI-Europe was contacted to participate from the beginning. - <http://www.teameurope.info>

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3.) BOTH SCEPTICAL: PRO EU AND EU CRITICAL GROUPS

Funny or annoying? I do not know.... but fact is, that there are EU critical as well as pro EU groups who are very sceptical concerning our campaign. Both think we could instrumentalise them for some "hidden" purpose. You see, if you get these reproach from BOTH sides you honestly do not know whether you should laugh or cry....

We think both sides should communicate much more and sit at one table at least if one crucial question is concerned: THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY IN GENERAL. So whatever you want, whatever your strategy plans for the "big game" might be.... Please support us if we are going to demand a fair referendum and to give the people a fair chance to decide on their future in Europe. If we do not join forces, we will have no chance to win.

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4.) NL - PARLIAMENT "DECLARES WISH" FOR REFERENDUM

Already in November 2002 there was a decision in the Dutch parliament: With a tight majority (72 to 70 votes) the Dutch Parliament has declared itself on November 5th in favour of a non-binding referendum on the Convention outcome (i.e. the European constitution). The literal text of the adopted motion was: "The parliament [...] declares its wish that the results of the Convention will be subject to preferably a European referendum, or if this will not be possible, that the ratification by the Netherlands of the specific constitutional changes will be subject to a [national] referendum."
read more: <http://www.european-referendum.org/up/up9.html>

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5.) D - SEVERAL DEMANDS FOR REFERENDUM

German politicians from opposing political camps argue in favour of a German referendum about the European Constitution: On January 8th, Bavarian Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber proposed to hold a referendum about the result of the Convention for the Future of Europe. Also Anna Lührmann and Josef Winkler from the Green Party demanded a stable democratic fundament for a European Constitution and therefore a referendum.
read more: <http://www.european-referendum.org/up/up11.html>

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6.) I&R WORKING GROUP WITH CONVENTION MEMBERS

In a cooperation between the Convention members: MEPs Alain Lamassoure (F), Diana Wallis (GB) and Heidi Hautala (FIN), Bundestag member Jürgen Meyer (D), as well as Europahaus Burgenland and democracy international, IRI Europe will form a working group on the inclusion of Initiative & Referendum rights in a possible EU Constitution and about the question how to implement a possible Constitution. - On January 20 the group holds its first meeting, to which all Convention members have been invited. Democracy international is represented by Heiko Dittmer and Michael Efler. - We will report about the results...

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7.) BRATISLAVA - CONTRIBUTIONS AVAILABLE

Finally most of the contributions and presentations given at the Bratislava Conference are available now at our news section. Find the agenda and just click on the symbol on the left side to get the text or pdf.
go to: <http://www.european-referendum.org/up/reader/index.html>

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8.) REFERENDUM BUS TOUR THROUGH EUROPE

