

Preparation for a new European Convention

Background:

The **European Movement International (EMI)** decided to put flesh to the bones of the idea how to involve Civil Society in the process of a **new European Convention for the future of Europe to be held after the 2014 European Elections**. However the Convention should be preceded by a preliminary forum of Civil Society Organisations for the preparation of a Convention in spring 2014 just ahead of the elections to the European Parliament involving umbrella organizations in Brussels. In order to involve as many diverse stakeholders and to shape the Preliminary Convention as promising as possible, national forums/councils should be launched ahead.

Art. 48 of the EU Treaty guarantees the participation of representatives of national governments, parliaments and the European Commission in the convention process but makes no reference to the involvement of civil society. It is therefore essential to provide solutions how to actively involve civil society and how to insure that the process of a new European Convention will be open and more democratic.

Therefore EMI can use its unique position as an international platform for stakeholders in European politics and function as facilitator. EMI is not only connecting more than 30 international umbrella interest groups but is also head organisation of 42 national councils; reaching out to transnational and national interest groups.

Once a preliminary convention gets demanded EMI has to secure that interest groups are broadly represented in order to model and install a forum for political alternatives. The “Italian-German Dialogue” supported this initiative.

Moreover, today’s technological tools and experience with gathering collective intelligence and implementing collective decision-making procedures allow for a transnational and participatory European convention-making process, practically calling for a broader and more inclusive process.

Concept:

Possible matrix:

- **Monitoring:** Political initiatives, opinions
- **Screening:** Member organisations policy
- **Shaping:** Lowest common denominator > fostering stronger position > strategy with 3rd organisations
- **Leading:** involvement of third organisations
- **Advocacy:** Public Affairs Management & Public Relations

As a first step, EMI member organizations should be encouraged by the EMI secretariat to communicate their opinion and expectations regarding a future European (Preliminary) Convention (support for the initiative, arguments, content and expectations, etc.). National Councils should furthermore be encouraged to demand and support a Preliminary Convention from their respective national governments and need, in a next step, support to actually launch national forums/councils. The respective outcomes must be collected and exchanged. EMI will therefore ensure the documentation via a platform interchanging future perspectives of a convention.

In parallel, the EMI secretariat/Board members should be attentive to all eventual initiatives and debates regarding a future European Convention, in order to participate in drafting and conceptualising a global support for such an initiative. Important sparring partners within the EMI network besides national councils are ETUC, CEMR as well as CESI. The enlargement of EMI towards other representative organizations is additionally of great necessity.

In order to align topics relevant to the several national backgrounds and respective citizens input themes of discussion are not to be lashed, but treated as possibilities. In respect to national requirements and conditions, partners must be named and involved. However national institutions are not to play a role within the civic dialogue. It is proposed to anyhow keep governments informed.

In this context, EMI and its member organizations are planning to create a transnational “Civil Society Alliance for a European Convention” (CSAEC), bringing together like minded civil society actors in order to build a common platform to assure an open, inclusive and more democratic convention process. EMI as an honest broker and the largest pro and pan-European civil society organization will be expected to take the lead of the alliance and the convention process. The consultation process inside the EMI network and the results of different bilateral and multilateral consultation will be presented during the EMI Federal Assembly to be held in Dublin on the 24th and 25th of May. It will address the concept of the convention in order to ensure a sustainable, progressive reform and a high level of popular legitimacy and tackle the question what would need to be done to find a common strategy amongst civil society actors across Europe for a new European convention concept.

If approved by the Federal Assembly, the transnational Alliance for a European Convention should then be officially launched and immediately start working in gathering interested organizations. A follow-up workshop in Brussels/Den Hague with member organizations and third organizations that are willing to join the EMI should be organized in autumn this year at the latest.

In parallel, each National Member Organization of the EMI will be invited to duplicate this approach in order to foster the debate in each Member country and eventually to structure national Civil Society Alliances.

Regarding the tools adopted, a special focus will be put on the usage of technological tools enabling to gather collective intelligence and support debate on the international level to discuss the major topics of content for the future of the EU.

Timeline:

- **November 2013:** Follow-up workshop in Brussels/Den Hague for a strategy to take off with national forums/councils
- **November 2013 – March 2014B:** National forums/councils
- **Spring 2014:** Preliminary forum in Brussels

Person in charge:

- Supervision of PC Institutional innovations
- Laetitia Veriter, coordinator in the EMI secretariat