

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

The European Humanist Federation,

CONSIDERING

1) The fundamental importance of a constitutional Treaty for a more democratic Union, guarantor of its founding values and of the citizens' fundamental rights as promulgated by the corresponding Charter

2) EHF contributions to

- the Commission White Paper on European governance
- the Convention work on civil society

3) The importance, for the development of projects affecting the whole society, of associations from the civil society acting as a relay to the political sphere without substituting it, and as a catalyst to the enhancement of an active citizenship

4) The need to recognize the consultative role of associations from the civil society by offering them a specific dialogue structure, distinct from the socio-economic actors

5) The need to apply following criteria, as defined by the European Economic and Social Committee, to the various representatives of civil society to the Union:

- to be organised on a voluntary basis, under the rule of law, and to act as a link between the expression of the citizens' will on specific topics and the bodies representing them
- to serve the general interest via a democratic process, thus ensuring their internal democratic legitimacy

INSISTENTLY REQUESTS

That article 34 of the constitutional Treaty

1. Explicitly recognizes the consultative role of civil society associations responding to the above criteria as being distinct from the socio-economic actors, and establishes a specific dialogue structure between civil society and the European institutions, under the political responsibility of the European Parliament,

2. Requires from associations seeking their recognition by the Union an internal democratic legitimacy, in accordance with the criteria set out by the European Economic and Social Committee,

3. Does not make any distinction between associations, whatever their philosophical or religious beliefs may be.