

# Annual report 2003: ERC – office Frankfurt

This document presents the work of the team in Frankfurt. The success of the *European Referendum Campaign* (ERC) results from a *network*. It would be *unthinkable* without the devoted support from activists all over Europe. In this report *our* efforts are described. The ERC demands referenda about the EU-

Constitution. The EU needs more democracy! Afterwards millions of Europeans would have experience with the use of direct democracy. We build up a network all over Europe. Many of its nodes will engage themselves for direct democracy.

## Network

At the end of the year 255 organisations from all over Europe have signed the ERC-appeal. They come from the whole political spectrum (issues: direct democracy (12%), environment (8%), development and globalisation (7%), EU-federalists (7%), EU-sceptics (6%), ...).

The main focus of the work of the coordination office in Frankfurt has been to inform and to animate for active participation. Moreover, we have succeeded in contacting many organisations which have signed the appeal.

## Preparations for the ERC in Bratislava and Frankfurt (2002)

The first task was to equip the new office with the necessary infrastructure. Office furniture and PCs have been acquired, in addition to that telephone and the computer-network has been established. This is the basis for the work of 3 full time employees and 2 interns.

The ERC was started on a conference in Bratislava. The subject matter of this conference was prepared by Thomas and the organisation was set up by Franz Isemann. 80 participants from 20 countries took part in the launching of the ERC.

## Homepage

The concept of the homepage has been developed and improved constantly. The site was relaunched four times and always adapted to the latest requirements.

We have published 87 news. 68 information from the EU-Observer and other sources have been made accessible.

Thus we offer a unique collection of information about our issue.

Visitors can recommend our site by using elements like eCards.

In addition the activities of the ERC have been presented online, they prove the enduring strength of our idea. Reports of our events can be accessed and all participants of the Europe-wide Day of Action have published an article. In June



our site was the “Homepage of the month” of the PES.

Benefit of our effort: An increasing number of visitors. Our site has been used

by politicians, media, scientists and many  
**Information material and science**

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citizens.

We have published a survey about "Referendums Probability". It presents the conditions of the constitutional law for a referendum on the EU-Constitution in the 25 countries and includes all relevant regulations concerning direct democracy. During four weeks it was downloaded over 2000 times.

A diagram shows current and future structure of the EU. Our information material is prepared in a professional layout. One example is the Fairy-Tale postcard created for the European Social Forum.

## **Convention on the Future of Europe**

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97 members of the Convention have signed our appeal. This was mainly achieved by the team of the Berlin office. We supported this work whenever it was possible. Several times we have travelled to Brussels to convince politicians to sign our appeal. We were ready to help at short notice: once we reached a request from Berlin at 10 p.m. whether we could help out in Brussels the next day at 11 a.m. Activists in several countries have been

activated to support the work of the Convention. Moreover, the vitality of the lobby-work in the Convention has been supported by a presentation on the website which was always up-to-date. In a last-minute email-action in favour of the article 46-4 we built up pressure to include this article. Result: Finally 97 members of the Convention signed the appeal and the article 46-4 has been included in the draft-constitution.

## **Action in Brussels in front of the EU-Parliament on 13 June**

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After the last session of the Convention on June 13 we organised an event at Place du Luxembourg – just in front of the European Parliament. Jürgen Meyer (MEP, SPD) and Jens-Peter Bonde (MEP, June Movement, Denmark) participated in an open air press-conference. Before that the ERC-Resolution, which had been signed by 120 NGOs and by 97 members at that time, had been handed in to the vice-president of the Convention (G. Amato, Italy). During the last "historic" session of the Convention the picture frame with the resolution in it was arranged directly on a chair behind

Giscard d'Estaing, the president of the Convention. The action in front of the Parliament attracted a lot of attention of the media. Eight camera teams have been filmed our display. A report on it has been printed several times afterwards, e.g. in the International Herald Tribune and Spiegel online.



## **The European Social Forum**

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On 12 – 16 November we presented the ERC in Paris, at the European Social Forum. According to official statements 50.000 people took part in this meeting. The preparations were very time-consuming. During a seminar with

speakers from five countries the further development and the elaboration of the petition for a referendum in the EU according to Art. 46-4 were discussed. Furthermore, the involvement of citizens in political decisions through instruments of

direct democracy was presented as a condition necessary for democratising the EU and its member states.

Additionally, two ERC-workshops took place. 10.000 postcards and flyers were distributed.

At our information point we called on the participants to cast their vote. There they were able to vote whether they were interested in deciding on the EU-

Constitution in a referendum. 95% voted „YES“.

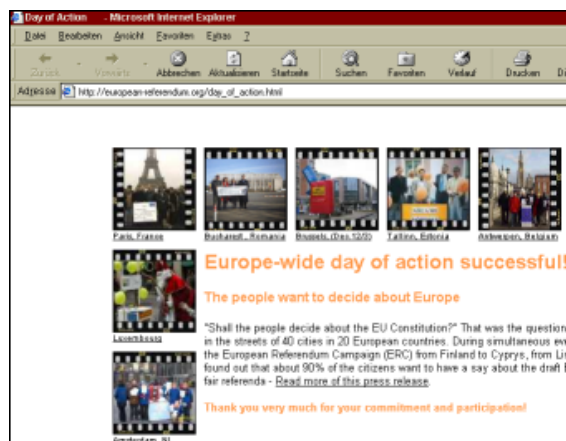
With this action we pointed to the Europe-wide day of action which took place one month later. In consequence of a contact in Paris our postcard was translated and printed by a Czech daily newspaper (print run 40.000). Several interviews have been given.

## Europe-wide Day of Action

On 6 December ERC-activities in over 40 cities of 20 countries took place. The campaigners showed visionary and impressively that the ERC is Europe-wide present on the street.

The idea was developed and tested in Frankfurt. After this action many reports and photos from all cities arrived. They tell the stories from the different countries.

The echo of media in the various countries bears out the synergy-effect which can emerge from international cooperation. In Germany our actions were hardly mentioned by the press apart from one report in the daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and a few articles in the local section. However, in other countries we were on TV at the primetime. In Luxemburg the DI-Logo was the background during the announcement of a report in the main news. In Slovakia we came into the "heavy rotation" of a news station. The EUobserver announced the



Day of Action with a separate announcement.

*Annotation:* Mehr Demokratie benefited from the synergies of the event at the Bandenburger Tor (18 December 2004) which was carried by three countries and which was organised by the office in Frankfurt. A team of ZDF made a report which was aired in *heute in Europa*.

## IGC-Action in Brussels

When the heads of government met in Brussels and tried to reach an agreement on the draft constitution on 12/13 December we were with our display next to the building of the European Council. We demanded: "EU-Constitution only by fair REFERENDA". The heads of state and of government couldn't overlook it when they looked out of the windows of the building. Their limousines passed our display on their way to endless negotiations. Length of time of the action:

first day: 10 a.m. – 11 p.m., second day 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Many photo journalists copied our display. It

could be seen on Belgian TV. It was in the background of many live commentaries because it stood at the focus of a camera podium. A photo of ZDF online proves this.



## Press

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The media all over Europe reported frequently about our campaign. Many interviews with newspapers, radio stations and TV stations had been done. The cooperation with the EUobserver ([www.euobserver.com](http://www.euobserver.com)) has proved to be very useful. They have reported several times about the ERC. The EUobserver is

an online magazine with up-to-date news about the EU. It is accessed daily by 10.000 „single users“ among these are many journalists and politicians from Brussels. Moreover, we built up a large list with press contacts.

## Conferences

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We presented the ERC and on many conferences and events: we won new partners for our Europe-wide network, managed to develop contacts with many dedicated people all over Europe. We participated in the monitoring project of IRI-Europe. During it, ten referenda on the EU-related matters (membership and

introduction of the euro) which had taken place in 2003 have been observed and analysed. The results will be the basis for a European Standard for Referenda. In Paris the ERC has been decorated with the „Newropeans-Award for political action“ by a jury of 200 dedicated citizens of Europe.

## Stimulating activities

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As a result of the Europe-wide work of the ERC successful campaigns and events could be animated or supported in many countries. Important factors for success were: high authenticity and political balance of the ERC. Before the European Council summit in December governments of seven countries announced or rather decided to hold a referendum. According to their

constitution only Ireland and Denmark are bound to do that. Our partners' activities had a demonstrable effect especially in the Benelux-countries. In the Netherlands we succeeded in reaching the covenant to hold a referendum by permanent lobby work. It will be the first in Dutch history ever.

## Fundraising

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The funding of the office in Frankfurt should originally suffice till September 2003. But these funds allowed us to work until December 2003. The activities of the office to fund our work (development and realisation of a concept to address companies, analysis of the Hoppenstedt foundation guide and addressing all potential interesting foundations, ...) effect only marginal resources. But our trainees were partly funded by other sources.

At the end of the year we got inquiries from an organisation in England and from the European Parliament. Several activities were already funded by these sources. Another funding by these sources is prospective as soon as the governments agree on the constitution. Now it is the most important duty to keep the strength of the ERC. Annotation: Ronald has graduated a fundraising course at MD and spoke with 29 resigned members. 629 € annual subscription could be received.

## **ERC 2004 – Future prospects**

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This year we will cooperate with groups from the European Parliament as well as with Vote 2004. First result was the successful event in Berlin on 18 February.

At present the ERC is busy with plans to expand the campaign. We check if a European-wide signature gathering could give the ERC new, stronger dynamic. At present Thomas works in Brussels to include all concerned groups in the planning project.

In June the elections to the European Parliament are going to take place. We will

use the expected media echo with the „Confession“-Campaign“: We ask all parties which will be available whether they are in favour or against a referendum. The results will be presented on the homepage and during a press conference in the European Parliament.

Furthermore, we arranged deepened cooperation with the English organisation Vote 2004.

These preparations will enforce the demand of the ERC to the governments and the citizens of Europe.

Marian Zdeb - Ronald Pabst -Thomas Rupp