



Format of the Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome

Dear Sir, Madam,

Herewith I would like to present to you the format of the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, organised by the Senate of the States-General of the Netherlands on 9 March 2007.

The core of the celebration was a debate on the future of Europe between students of all Dutch and Flemish universities and members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Besides celebrating the tremendous success of European cooperation, the celebration was also used as a vehicle to re-open the discussion in the Netherlands on the future of Europe after the negative result of the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty. It has been a successful event. More than 300 students attended the conference as well as over 100 representatives of the civil society, government institutions and the press. For further information, please consult our website www.europapoort.nl.

We do wish you a successful event.

Yours faithfully,

Mission statement

Late 2005, the Senate of States-General considered that, despite the negative vote on the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, there was hardly any debate on the future of Europe in the Netherlands. The Senate attaches great importance to this debate, because it not only concerns the future of Europe, it also concerns the future of the Netherlands. The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome was therefore a perfect momentum to re-launch the discussion on the importance of European cooperation and on the position of the Netherlands in that cooperation process. The Senate unanimously agreed that the main actors of the event should be students of all Dutch and Flemish universities.

Format

a. Topic

In the first place, an overall topic has been determined. This topic was then split up into four main policy areas/issues. Three on core issues and a fourth to come to concrete steps which can/should be taken in the future. Concrete results are, after all, the best way to gain legitimacy and to receive media attention.

b. Discussions

The debates were held on the basis of a sharply formulated and controversial thesis in each of the chosen policy areas, so that a lively debate could take place.

The chairperson presented the thesis and asked the audience to cast a vote on the thesis, i.e. before the actual discussion took place. Only *yes* and *no* votes were allowed. The results were projected so that both the debaters and the audience could see the results.

After the voting on the thesis, two persons - selected by the organisation beforehand - were invited to plead respectively in favour and against the thesis – as a warming-up of the debate. Each person had two minutes to introduce his/her point of view.

The main discussion on a particular thesis took place immediately after the two short introductions.

The organisation chose to divide the participants beforehand in debaters pro and contra, so that the debaters could prepare themselves properly and a high quality debate could take place. Each group of debaters consisted of 10 persons. The main discussions took around half an hour per thesis.

After the discussion a second voting took place, now with the debate in mind. Again the results were shown. The chairperson made a preliminary analysis and asked some guests in the audience for a first reaction.

c. Voting on individual theses

After the break, several individual theses were voted upon, to serve as a warming-up for the afternoon sessions. These theses deliberately dealt with controversial themes. It is a possibility for the organisation to gain insight in the position of the audience on certain issues that might not have been or will not be touched upon during the four discussions.

d. Chairperson

The chairperson has a crucial role. For a lively and high quality debate it is important that the chairperson is well introduced into the subject and that he/she maintains a high degree of flexibility. This assures a lively debate in which also the audience is involved. Several times, our chairperson asked the audience to vote on a particular thesis that had come up during the debate. It required a high degree of flexibility of the technicians as well.

e. Side program

The Senate chose to invite a high profile speaker to open the conference. This person had a clear vision on the matter and was in the position to address the most important challenges within a certain policy area. The conference was closed by a speaker who brought the discussions on the four themes together and was able to look both back and forward.

f. Jury

Since the debate consisted of four discussions, the Senate chose to install a jury to point a winner for each of the discussions.

Programme 9 March 2007

Tijd

- 08.45 **Reception** **Arrival of guests and registration**
- 10.00 **Opening** **Geert Jan Hamilton**
Secretary General of the Senate
- 10.05 **Speech** **Yvonne Timmerman-Buck**
Speaker of the Senate
- 10.15 **Speech** **Mark Eyskens**
Former Prime Minister of Belgium
- 11.00 **Debate** **Ben Knapen – chair**
- 11.20 **Theme I** **Europe as a community of values**
European citizens should be educated in the European
central values and liberties.
- 12.10 **Theme II** **The borders of the Union**
The European Union should introduce a ‘B-membership’
- 13.00 **Lunch**
- 14.15 **Theses** **Voting on individual theses**
- 14.35 **Theme III** **Economy and Environment**
The Member States should transfer all their competences
regarding the environment and energy to the European
Union.
- 15.15 **Theme IV** **The institutional future of the Union**
Europe should become a federal state
- 15.55 **Break**
- 16.30 **Speech** **Mark Mazower**
Professor 20th Century European History – Columbia
University, New York
- 17.30 **Jury** **Announcement of the winners of the debate**
- 17.45 **Closing** **René van der Linden**
Chairman of the committee on European Cooperation
Organisations of the Senate
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council
of Europe
- 18.00 **Drinks**