

Project: **The Transformation of Political
Mobilisation and Communication in
European Public Spheres**

Project acronym: Europub.com
Project website: <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>

Funded by: 5th Framework Programme of the European
Commission

Contract No. HPSE-CT2000-00046
Work package: **Delphi**
WP Coordinator: Paul Statham
Deliverable number: **D 6.5**

Report **National case report of Delphi
analysis**

Case report **United Kingdom**

Author: Emily Gray

Date: 21 April 2004

**UK National Delphi Report
Political and Media Actors' Visions of the Future of Europe**

I.	Analytic Summary	3
<i>i.</i>	<i>Main perceived areas of change</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>ii.</i>	<i>Type of change</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>iii.</i>	<i>Degree of change</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>iv.</i>	<i>Attitudes to European integration</i>	<i>5</i>
II.	General Overview	6
Table 1	Actors' perceptions on whether European integration contributed to specific developments in the European region	7
III.	Detailed Analysis of Actors' Perceptions	9
<i>i.</i>	<i>State actors</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>ii.</i>	<i>Political parties</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>iii.</i>	<i>Interest groups</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>iv.</i>	<i>NGOs</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>v.</i>	<i>Media actors</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>vi.</i>	<i>Overall national impression: all actors</i>	<i>21</i>
Appendix 1	List of interviewees and interview dates	24

I. Analytic Summary

There are some striking differences between the visions of the future of Europe articulated by different types of political actors in the UK – state actors, political parties, interest groups, NGOs and the print media – which this report explores. Beyond actor type, however, another key dividing line on visions of European integration in the UK is between pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics. For example, there were many similarities in the futures for Europe sketched out by the Conservative Party and by Eurosceptic NGOs, which predicted a growing democratic deficit, expressed concerns about the gap between elites and citizens, and forecast serious problems ahead for European political elites given the lack of a European demos. In contrast, organisations that have been pro-European at least in recent years – such as the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, interest groups such as business organisations, the Trades Union Congress and the National Farmers’ Union, and campaign groups such as the European Movement – typically advocated reform of the EU but were more positive about its future than the Eurosceptics. This divide in the kinds of scenarios envisaged by British political actors for the future of Europe reflects the fact that a Eurosceptic/pro-European cleavage has emerged in UK politics, likely to set the UK apart to some extent from other EU member states in the Europub study.

i. Main perceived areas of change

The key issue mentioned by all types of political actors as facing the EU was enlargement, with two main impacts on the EU being mentioned. First, many interviewees mentioned the challenges enlargement forces for effective decision making in a Europe of 25 states rather than 15, with difficulties in persuading 25 member states to agree. Secondly, several actors identified that enlargement catalyses the emergence of a two-speed or multi-speed Europe, where some states forge ahead with deeper integration while others do not participate in further integration in certain areas. In a more diverse and larger EU, the argument runs, there will be less consensus between member states on the degree of integration that is desirable, leading to a gradual fissure between states that prefer further integration and states that do not (Britain being in the latter camp). Some interviewees also perceived enlargement as leading to the slowing down, or even the stabilisation, of the European

integration process, since the creation of a wider Union does not favour deeper integration.

State actors in particular focused on the Convention on the Future of Europe as an important development in the EU's near future, unsurprising given the importance the Convention's plans for EU constitutional and institutional reform have for national political elites. Two interviewees had represented the UK at the Convention, and both had serious doubts regarding its outcome, one describing it as a 'big missed opportunity' which 'never challenged or questioned any of the status quo'¹. Other areas mentioned by political actors as important in the near future of Europe were diverse, including economic policy, foreign policy and defence, the single currency and the specificities of the British debate, the completion of the single market and the EU's relationship with the US.

ii. Type of change

As pointed out in the above discussion of enlargement, one development predicted by interviewees of all actor types was the emergence of a 'two-speed' or 'core' Europe. Events mentioned as catalysing this development were the creation of the eurozone, not participated in by all EU states, enlargement, and the aftermath of the Iraq war.

State actors were particularly concerned to argue that European integration was not evolving in a federalist direction. This concern of elite actors to refute allegations of a federalist EU reflects the fact that federalism has been a crucial issue in the British debate, with Eurosceptics claiming that the EU will constitute a 'federal superstate' and pro-Europeans counter-arguing that the EU does not lead to federalism. Both the majority of the Eurosceptic actors and the media actors interviewed identified the issue of the 'democratic deficit' as crucial. However, the Eurosceptics typically focused on the gap between political elites' and citizens' attitudes to European integration, arguing that the gulf in opinion leads to difficult times ahead for political elites in Europe. In contrast, media actors' discussions of the democratic deficit tended to focus on the issue of effective communication between the EU institutions

¹ Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (1), 22 July 2003.

and citizens, which can be ascribed to journalists' positions as mediators in communication between political actors and institutions and the publics they govern.

iii. Degree of change

There was no consensus between political actors on whether European integration was about to undergo a period of stabilisation, gradual or rapid change, crisis or disintegration. While some saw the coming period as a time of consolidation for the EU, where little further integration was likely, others expressed uncertainty, and still others opined that the EU was headed for a gradual breakdown or crisis. Those who saw the years ahead as a time of stabilisation typically linked this stability to enlargement, with less forging ahead with the integration process likely in a wider, more diverse EU. Interest group interviewees in particular expressed uncertainty about the direction in which European integration was evolving. Those interviewees identifying times of crisis ahead for the EU did so for various reasons, one linking this to the rise of the far right across Europe and the potential ease with which European publics are convinced of the veracity of their message, another linking it to increased difficulties in relations between EU states post-enlargement, and others (in particular Eurosceptic NGOs) ascribing coming crises to the gap between elite and public opinion on European integration.

iv. Attitudes to European integration

Few UK political actors advocated much greater political integration between EU states. In regard to whether political actors viewed developments in European integration as generally positive or generally negative, the majority of the organisations interviewed were broadly in favour of European integration as it stood, although they recognised that thoroughgoing reforms to the EU system were necessary. There was a tendency among many of the UK's political actors – particularly those in the agriculture field – to view European integration as simply an accepted fact of life, something to be engaged with rather than disputed. Nonetheless, there are also strong currents of Eurosceptic opinion in the UK, represented in our sample by organisations such as the Conservative Party, UK Independence Party, Green Party and Eurosceptic NGOs New Europe and the Democracy Movement. These actors made broadly negative forecasts about the future of Europe, predicting

major splits ahead between European states and identifying the democratic deficit as a crucial area of crisis.

Finally, while all actors made some criticisms of the EU institutions, the particular issues they focused upon differed. State actors emphasised the question of accountability as crucial, while media actors typically mentioned the issue of the institutions' remoteness from European citizens.

In summary, while the majority of political actors in the UK study see some benefits in European integration and accept it as a fact of life, there are still many who question the basis of European integration itself. This divide is an important factor conditioning the kinds of visions of European integration that actors put forward, with Eurosceptic actors typically painting more negative, crisis-ridden scenarios of the EU's future and focusing on the gulf between elite and citizen opinions on Europe as a particular source of conflict. Political actors generally acknowledge that change is ahead, particularly with eastward enlargement in 2004, although there is no consensus on the degree of change that will take place. There was a general recognition that European integration is unlikely to advance as a uniform process in which all member states participate equally. Instead, a 'two-speed' or 'multi-speed' Europe was seen as likely to emerge, with the UK part of a bloc of states not eager to integrate much further.

II. General Overview

Table 1, overleaf, aids us in giving an overall impression of how different actors perceive the contribution of European integration to the region. Interviewees were asked whether the process of European integration contributed to six specific developments in Europe: peace and security, political stability, economic growth, economic competitiveness, environmental protection, and social equality. Where they gave a positive response, their score was recorded as 3; where they claimed European integration 'partly' contributed, the score was 1.5; and where they said that European integration did not contribute to that development, the score recorded was 0.

Aggregate scores for all actor types are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Actors' perceptions on whether European Integration contributes to specific developments in the European region

	ALL	State Actors	Parties	Interest Groups	NGOs	Journalists
1. Security	2.6	2.3*	1.8	3.0	2.6	3.0
2. Political stability	2.5	2.2	2.0	2.7	2.4	3.0
3. Economic growth	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.3
4. Economic competitiveness	1.9	1.8	2.0	2.4	1.9*	1.3*
5. Environmental protection	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.6	2.3*	3.0*
6. Social equality	1.9	1.1	1.5	2.4	2.0*	2.0
ALL	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.6	2.3	2.4
N	44	9	6	10	10	9

Interest groups emerge as the actor type most likely to argue that European integration has contributed positively to developments in Europe, followed closely by media actors and NGOs. British business has traditionally been positive towards European integration – in particular, big business – and from the late 1980s onwards, the trade union movement has also had strong currents of pro-Europeanism, unions perceiving opportunities to advance a social agenda at European level that were not available domestically. That the score for interest groups perceiving benefits from European integration is high can also be linked to the fact that one of the three policy fields in which actors of all types were interviewed was agriculture; farmers' unions and landowners' organisations have received strong support from the European level under the Common Agricultural Policy.

The British print media is well known for its partisanship on European issues, with a vociferous anti-European press as well as several more pro-European newspapers. That media actors emerge as perceiving positive developments stemming from European integration here is due to the available sample of just six broadsheet journalists – four from the Guardian and two from the Times – who were asked these questions about the future of Europe. The Guardian is broadly pro-European, although many of its economic journalists are not in favour of the single currency, while the Times takes a Eurosceptic position. A diverse sample of NGOs was interviewed, and the overall score here masks the fact that a wide variety of responses were given to the question by pro-European and Eurosceptic NGOs in the field of

European integration, consumer, environmental and conservation organisations in the field of agriculture, and pro-asylum seeker organisations in the field of immigration.

State actors and political party representatives were less convinced than other types of actors that European integration contributes to positive political, economic and social developments in Europe, with an average score for both of 2.0. Differences are apparent between state actors and parties, the former being particularly sceptical as to whether European integration leads to social equality (with some interviewees feeling that this was not desirable in any case), and the latter the most negative of any actor type on the question of European integration's contribution to peace and security in Europe. For political parties, the fact that some Eurosceptic parties were included in the sample (Conservative Party, UK Independence Party, Green Party) may account for the overall party score on the contribution of European integration being lower than for all other actor types except state actors. The aggregate score disguises the degree of dissent that exists between different political parties in the UK on the benefits and drawbacks of European integration.

In the UK, there was a broad consensus on European integration contributing to peace and security, political stability, economic growth and environmental protection in Europe. However, British political actors were less positive regarding whether European integration could be said to contribute to economic competitiveness, or to social equality.

III. Detailed Analysis of Actors' Perceptions

i. State actors

The ways in which political actors answered the question of the future direction of European integration were revealing as to what they considered to be the crucial issues facing Europe in the coming years, both in terms of events and policy areas mentioned and in terms of the general turn of European integration. For state actors, critical issues mentioned were the Convention on the Future of Europe, enlargement, British membership of the euro, relations between the EU and the US, and the single market in a time of globalisation. Both interviewees directly involved in the Convention – both representatives of the UK Parliament - were sceptical as to its outcome. Labour MP Gisela Stuart, who in December 2003 wrote a pamphlet for the Fabian Society critical of the Convention, argued that:

‘The Convention was old men dreaming. We never challenged or questioned any of the status quo... My sense is that’s the big missed opportunity, that we assumed you could even with 25 [states] widen and deepen.’²

Other British interviewees also touched on enlargement in terms of its effects on European integration; like Stuart, they typically mentioned the challenges it presents for effective decision-making in an EU of 25 states:

‘The EU will look seriously at limited measures of integration if in its interests, and now, if it can persuade 25 nations to agree.’³

Key arguments made by British state actors about the general direction of European integration were that European integration was not leading to federalism, that a more flexible, ‘two-speed’ Europe was emerging, and that the gap between elites and citizens on European issues continued to widen. Those state actors who identified the future emergence of a more flexible, two-speed Europe saw it as coming about due to the creation of the eurozone (‘the eurozone already makes it [the EU] two-speed’⁴) and/or because of enlargement.

² UK Representative of National Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (1), *ibid.*

³ House of Lords EU Scrutiny Committee, 27 October 2003.

⁴ Minister, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 13 August 2003.

The idea of a federal Europe has been particularly controversial in the British debate, and governing elites clearly felt it necessary to make the case that the future of the European Union is not as a ‘federal superstate’. Those state actors who sought to refute the idea that European integration leads to federalism were Labour MPs or peers and pro-European Conservatives. Typical comments were:

‘The high tide of federalism is over... many European integration issues... will remain mainly intergovernmental.’⁵

‘The idea of a European superstate is never going to happen. Member states are too keen to hold on to their national identities and autonomy.’⁶

‘I don’t think the last few months show any evidence of a superstate, rather the opposite. The idea of a single market is still the biggest motor.’⁷

In contrast, the Eurosceptics interviewed at state actor level typically answered the question of the future of European integration in relation to the ‘democratic deficit’ and the gap between elite pro-Europeanism and public scepticism. For example, the Conservative representative of Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe commented:

‘It [European integration] will fail because these contradictions, the gap between the public and the elite, will become unsustainable. Every referendum goes wrong and then all gets ignored again... The basic problem is you cannot drive a continent as diverse as Europe into a mould.’⁸

State actors on the whole, however, agreed with the direction in which they saw European integration moving. There was little desire to move towards much greater political integration (‘I’m not a federalist. I don’t believe we’re ready for a United States of Europe’⁹) but in any case, this was not the direction in which state actors typically saw European integration progressing. In general, the Environment Minister’s comment that ‘I’m comfortable with where we are and where we’re

⁵ House of Lords EU Scrutiny Committee, *ibid.*

⁶ Minister, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *ibid.*

⁷ House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 3 July 2003.

⁸ Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (2), 27 October 2003.

⁹ House of Lords EU Scrutiny Committee, *ibid.*

moving to'¹⁰ expresses the typical position of British state actors on European integration. The exceptions were the UK's parliamentary representatives on the Convention. One expressed concern as to the way the Convention had turned out, saying 'I hope they're not going to look back and say, what planet did they live on?'¹¹ The other, who identified the breakdown of the integration process, claimed that it would be 'very sad' were the EU to disintegrate, identifying the euro's effects on unemployment in Germany as one area where 'damage has already been created' but people are 'powerless to stop it'¹².

Virtually all state actors interviewed identified room for improvement in the performance of the EU institutions. The key concern was accountability, the comment that 'there is a serious issue of accountability and how people relate to institutions and vice versa'¹³ being representative. The European Parliament was cited as having a lack of real power, although this was felt to be changing and positive comments were made about its recent performance, such as 'Parliament hasn't been bad recently, but it shouldn't run before it can walk, and it's only just walking.'¹⁴ The Eurosceptic state actor interviewed expressed particular cynicism about the EU institutions' self-interest:

'[L]ike all institutions they look after themselves first... That's a major critique of the Convention, it became a power grab by the institutions, the only institutions that failed were the national parliaments.'¹⁵

ii. Political parties

Of the UK's three major political parties, two are pro-European (Labour and the Liberal Democrats) and one Eurosceptic (the Conservative Party). Representatives of two smaller parties – the UK Independence Party, which campaigns on a platform of British withdrawal from the European Union, and the Green Party, Eurosceptic on the grounds of the party's opposition to free trade and global capitalism - were also interviewed. The major dividing line on the future of European integration between

¹⁰ Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (1), *ibid.*

¹¹ Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (2), *ibid.*

¹² Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (2), *ibid.*

¹³ House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *ibid.*

¹⁴ House of Lords EU Scrutiny Committee, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe (2), *ibid.*

parties was the pro-European/Eurosceptic cleavage. While Labour and Liberal Democrat interviewees either agreed with the turn they saw European integration as taking, or agreed while making certain caveats about the need for some policy areas to remain primarily determined at nation-state level, the Conservative, Green and UK Independence Party interviewees did not agree with European developments.

Both Labour representatives identified enlargement as a crucial issue, one arguing that the process will be successful and that integration ‘can bring great benefits’¹⁶. They argued that there would be more integration in certain areas; one interviewee identified the completion of the single market and trade as crucial areas of integration, although he was unconvinced that common foreign and defence policies would become a reality. The general Labour mantra, expressed by two Labour Party interviewees, was that Britain is ‘more influential by being in Europe than on the margins’¹⁷.

In contrast, Conservative Party interviewees saw a problematic near future for European integration; when asked what direction European integration was taking, one interviewee responded that ‘I hope it doesn’t’¹⁸. Conservative Party interviewees mentioned the democratic deficit and the gap between elites and citizens on European issues as crucial issues for Europe’s future. The Shadow Minister for Europe argued that the way to give people a sense of participation is ‘to strengthen the role of national parliaments and... bring powers back towards a lower level’¹⁹. While expressing support for European integration, the Liberal Democrat interviewees also argued for reform (‘the democratic deficit is a big worry for us’²⁰) and identified the particular dynamics of the debate in Britain as setting back progress on the euro issue (‘what’s at stake is how long it takes for timid governments and a reactionary press to get out of the way so that people’s general European orientations can be realised’²¹).

Some political party interviewees – both pro-European and Eurosceptic – saw the coming years as a period of stabilisation for the EU (‘We’re more likely to stand quite

¹⁶ Labour Party (Europe), 8 May 2003.

¹⁷ Labour Party (Europe), *ibid*; Minister, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *ibid*.

¹⁸ Conservative Party (Europe), 8 May 2003.

¹⁹ Conservative Party, *ibid*.

²⁰ Liberal Democrats (Immigration), 31 October 2003.

²¹ Liberal Democrats (Foreign Affairs), 6 May 2003.

still in the next few years on it'²²). However, others saw the period as a time of change ('expansion to the east is going to be a very big challenge'²³), and the Green Party representative viewed it as a period of steady disintegration ('relationships between various countries and groups of countries will become more and more difficult...you will have a gradual break between those countries which wish to integrate more and those who don't'²⁴). Little consensus was apparent between the British political parties on the future direction of European integration.

In regard to the future role of the EU institutions, all major parties - both pro-European and Eurosceptic - called for reform. One Labour representative described the party as 'supportive of EU institutions, recognising they need to be reformed'²⁵, while a Liberal Democrat representative, despite a general pro-European orientation, claimed the EU institutions 'are unreformed and untransparent, which gives the EU a bad reputation'²⁶. The Conservative Party Shadow Minister for Europe argued that the institutions were 'rather ill-suited to what is required to make the EU work' and identified a referendum on the Constitution as a necessity in determining the institutional future of the EU²⁷.

Interviewees were divided as to whether the European Parliament was gaining in importance or not, and the desirability of this development. The Green Party interviewee saw the European Parliament as growing in strength, which he viewed as an welcome development since 'the more democracy we have the better'²⁸. In contrast, one Labour peer argued that the EP 'is a shambles', and that while it will have a lot more formal powers, 'its exertion of those will be in reality very limited. So I don't see a huge increase in the importance of the European Parliament'²⁹. Like many state actors, he viewed the Commission as a likely loser from the Convention, predicting that 'the likelihood is that the Council of Ministers will increase its efficiency and its dominance at the expense largely of the Commission'.

²² UK Independence Party, 6 May 2003.

²³ Liberal Democrats (Agriculture), 3 July 2003.

²⁴ Green Party, 11 June 2003.

²⁵ Labour Party (Europe), *ibid.*

²⁶ Liberal Democrats (Foreign Affairs), *ibid.*

²⁷ Conservative Party, *ibid.*

²⁸ Green Party, *ibid.*

²⁹ Labour Party (Agriculture), 27 June 2003.

iii. Interest groups

Opinions on the future direction of European integration were sought from several interest groups - organisations claiming to represent the interests of certain constituencies. On the subject of European integration, these were business (the CBI) and trade unions (TUC); on agriculture, farmers (National Farmers' Union, Small Farms Association) and landowners (Country Land and Business Association); on immigration, churches (Churches' Commission for Racial Justice), trade unions (TUC) and lawyers (Immigration Law Practitioners' Association). We also interviewed experts on European integration from thinktanks and research organisations (Centre for European Reform, The Federal Trust), included here as interest groups.

Many of the UK's most significant interest groups expressed uncertainty as to the direction European integration was taking. This puts them at odds with the state actors and political parties, who tended to put forward far more definite views of future European developments.

'Enlargement, French and German economic difficulties, ageing populations... present us with a crisis, which we haven't really discussed the solutions to. So it's grey at the moment.'³⁰

'The direction's uncertain at the moment... There's not much momentum towards more integration from the EU institutions... and the Convention isn't adding any.'³¹

'It's at a crossroads... There is a tension, reflected in the discussions on the Convention, between tendencies of centralisation and subsidiarity... Nobody knows which direction Europe's taking.'³²

There was no interest group consensus on the direction European integration was taking. To illustrate this, of the two interviewees from the TUC, while the immigration interviewee identified a more integrated Europe ('the direction it's taking is to be more integrated'³³), the European integration interviewee argued that not much more integration would take place and that there would not be 'big jumps' in

³⁰ Confederation of British Industry [CBI], 7 October 2003.

³¹ TUC (European Integration), 15 July 2003.

³² National Farmers' Union [NFU], 12 June 2003.

³³ TUC (Immigration), 10 October 2003.

the European integration process³⁴. Even within the same interest group, different opinions were expressed regarding the future evolution of the European Union.

Like the state actors, several interviewees identified the emergence of a ‘two-speed’, ‘variable geometry’ or ‘core’ Europe in coming years, where some member states pursue integration at a more accelerated pace than others. This was related to the eurozone and to enlargement, as well as to European splits over the war in Iraq:

‘As long as the UK’s not in the euro, it could become a two-speed, variable geometry kind of Europe.’³⁵

‘[We’re] already seeing signs of ‘core Europe’ ideas running around.’³⁶

‘I can see very powerful forces making for a more cohesive and coherent hardcore of Europe. The Iraq war has given an impetus to that... the EU is evolving in a federalist direction, the only missing federalist element is foreign policy.’³⁷

There were also interviewees who saw Europe evolving in a rather different way, with the Franco-German axis weakened with the coming enlargement. For example, the CLA interviewee pointed out that with enlargement, ‘decisions will have to be taken at the lowest common denominator’, meaning that European integration will necessarily evolve in a less ambitious way, ‘in the direction of freer trade’³⁸. In sum, while some interviewees predicted the emergence of a core bloc of integrationist-minded states in the coming years, others argued that in a widened EU deeper integration becomes less plausible.

All the interest groups interviewed were generally pro-European integration. For those in the agriculture field, European integration was often seen as an accepted fact of life to the extent that it was no longer questioned; the CLA interviewee commented that we ‘don’t think whether we’re in favour, because we can’t influence them. We try and guess what’s going to happen’³⁹. In contrast, some interest groups in the

³⁴ TUC (European Integration), *ibid.*

³⁵ TUC (European Integration), *ibid.*

³⁶ Centre for European Reform, 9 May 2003.

³⁷ Federal Trust, 4 May 2003.

³⁸ Country Land and Business Association [CLA], 27 June 2003.

³⁹ Country Land and Business Association, *ibid.*

immigration field expressed caveats; for example, the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association interviewee commented that 'I have mixed opinions about it because of the democratic deficit'⁴⁰.

A lack of driving force towards integration from the EU institutions was forecast by some interest group interviewees, in particular the TUC representative, who argued that there was a 'real loss of momentum throughout the institutions' at the present time⁴¹. Others, such as the CBI, saw the EU institutions as key drivers for the EU; while the CBI expressed concerns that issues such as the extension of qualified majority voting were not in their favour, they also understood that without such reforms it would be hard to move forward.

Some interviewees pointed out that the role and influence of the EU institutions in the coming years depended on the direction taken by European integration. The interviewee from the Federal Trust sketched out two scenarios. First, he identified a possible seizing up of the EU with the coming enlargement, meaning that 'all the institutions would be the losers'; alternatively, he also argued that if a 'core Europe' were formed, the European Parliament would be a particular loser as its role would be compromised⁴². Similarly, the National Farmers' Union interviewee envisaged two possible scenarios depending on whether the EU evolved in a more centralised or a more intergovernmental direction:

'If we become more centralised the Commission will stay very important, if not the Council will become more so. We imagine the European Parliament will become more influential.'⁴³

Whether the Commission would experience a loss of power in the coming years or not was a moot point. While the NFU interviewee felt that this was dependent on whether European integration evolved in a centralising direction - which the NFU would prefer – some interviewees held that the Commission would maintain its powers in the near future ('the Commission will still hold the ring'⁴⁴). Like the NFU

⁴⁰ Immigration Law Practitioners' Association [ILPA], 30-10-03.

⁴¹ TUC (European Integration), *ibid*.

⁴² Federal Trust, *ibid*.

⁴³ National Farmers' Union, *ibid*.

⁴⁴ Country Land and Business Association, *ibid*.

representative, some other interest group interviewees also argued that the European Parliament would become more influential in the coming years.

iv. NGOs

British NGOs active in three fields - European integration, agriculture and immigration – were questioned on how they saw the future direction of European integration. In the European integration field, two Eurosceptic NGOs (New Europe, a research organisation calling for EU reform, and the Democracy Movement, a campaign group focusing particularly on grassroots mobilisation against the EU) and two pro-European NGOs (longstanding campaign group the European Movement, and small federalist group Federal Union) were interviewed. These organisations form part of a wider pro-European/Eurosceptic cleavage within UK politics, and their opinions are considered here as a special case, analysed separately from the views of NGOs active in the specific policy fields of agriculture and immigration. On agriculture, we interviewed consumer, environmental and conservation organisations to ensure a balance of NGOs working in the field was represented (Consumers' Association, Sustain, The National Trust, WWF). On immigration, we interviewed four NGOs working for the rights of asylum seekers: Amnesty International in the UK, the Refugee Council, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and Asylum Aid.

Opinions on the future direction of Europe differed sharply between the groups campaigning for or against further integration. Unsurprisingly, the Eurosceptic groups painted negative scenarios of the EU's future, while the pro-European groups were optimistic that European integration would evolve positively, in the direction they desired. The interviewee from the moderate Eurosceptic organisation New Europe argued that huge splits were already evident on issues such as economic policy and foreign policy as to whether EU policy should evolve in a supranational or intergovernmental direction, and that it was therefore 'really difficult to tell what the direction will be'⁴⁵. The interviewee from the Democracy Movement described an imminent time of crisis for what he termed the 'European political class':

⁴⁵ New Europe, 8 May 2003.

‘Combined with undemocratic institutions, I could foresee serious problems erupting, with people making it a mainstream political issue. If governments don’t respond you could find some pretty dangerous organisations emerging.’⁴⁶

In sharp contrast, the European Movement interviewee mentioned no gap between elite and citizen attitudes to European integration, arguing that European integration is ‘what people want’. He put forward a highly positive scene of Europe’s future, arguing that ‘the whole *raison d’être* [of European integration] really has changed’:

‘For the old school of European politicians it was all about never a war again. That’s no longer relevant to the majority of electors within the EU. It’s what does the EU do – environment, freedom of movement, economic reasons, stronger voice in the world, a bloc not a state... That’s what will come out of the Convention, which is liberating at every level... That’s what people want.’⁴⁷

Finally, the interviewee from Federal Union saw a federal future for the European Union. Although not inevitable, he argued that a federalist turn was likely ‘because it makes sense. It is the solution to a range of problems, the problems of actually having effective government’⁴⁸.

When assessing the future role and performance of the EU institutions, sharp differences again emerged between pro-European and Eurosceptic NGOs. The pro-European interviewees typically argued that while the institutions were far from perfect, necessary reforms would improve the situation vastly:

‘They have got to become more effective and efficient and better communicators of what they’re doing, but basically they have been dealt a bad hand.’⁴⁹

In contrast, both Eurosceptic organisations focused on the issue of the EU institutions, and European elites’, distance from the public. One interviewee pointed out that ‘the problem which everybody recognises is that there is no European demos and European democracy’⁵⁰, while the other claimed that the EU institutions were

⁴⁶ Democracy Movement, 4 June 2003.

⁴⁷ European Movement, 7 May 2003.

⁴⁸ Federal Union, 9 May 2003.

⁴⁹ Federal Union, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ New Europe, *ibid.*

‘primarily designed to be elite institutions which are... hermetically sealed and protected from popular engagement’⁵¹.

Broadly speaking, while the Eurosceptic NGOs predicted a difficult future for Europe, with splits, crises and a growing gap between elites and the citizens they govern, the pro-European NGOs couched their discussions of Europe’s future in terms of positive developments and necessary reforms to achieve better-functioning institutions. The NGOs active on agriculture and immigration issues tended to address European integration in terms of their own fields of specialisation rather than giving general views.

Representatives of the NGOs active on agricultural issues gave more detailed and considered opinions about European integration issues than did the representatives of NGOs active on immigration issues. This can perhaps be ascribed to the central role of the EU in agricultural policy decisions, relative to its limited but expanding role in immigration policymaking. Agriculture-related NGOs have by necessity to be far more familiar with the workings of the EU than do immigration-related groups. All the NGO active on agricultural issues recognised that there were some benefits to European integration, although all saw the need to reform CAP and the European institutions, whereas for the immigration NGOs there was no such consensus. One organisation articulated a left-wing critique of European integration as linked with global capitalism, and was against the process (Asylum Aid), while the other two saw European integration as broadly beneficial (Amnesty UK and the Refugee Council).

v. *Media actors*

Since the questions about the future of Europe were added to the journalists interview schedule only after some interviews had already been conducted, several responses to these questions are missing for media actors. Those journalists who did have the chance to respond were from the Guardian (four journalists) and the Times (two journalists). As such, this data forms a partial picture of UK media actors’ views on the future of Europe, focusing on one left-wing and one right-wing broadsheet.

⁵¹ Democracy Movement, *ibid.*

Some Guardian journalists interviewed viewed European integration as a slowing process, nearing the feasible limits of integration. Comments from the Guardian's European Editor focused on two issues: first, the balance of power between the national and supranational levels within the EU, and secondly, the relationship between the EU institutions and the public:

'I think it has probably reached the limits of where it can go in terms of getting the balance right between the national and the supranational... There are lessons to be learnt about the extent to which people can give over significant areas of their lives to institutions that are by necessity remote, unfamiliar and distant from them.'⁵²

The newspaper's Chief Leader Writer also argued that European integration was slowing down, primarily due to enlargement. He identified that integration in an expanded and more diffuse Europe meant differential levels of development in different areas, rather than a single uniform trend. The Times' Brussels Correspondent also cited enlargement as a crucial issue, commenting that it would cause 'real problems' in the coming years. While he did not view this as leading to crisis or breakdown, he did see a future for Europe where groups of member states integrate to different degrees:

'There will be closer integration between some countries with 'enhanced' or 'reinforced' cooperation. You will find common policies which apply to all EU members will become less common.'⁵³

On the future role and performance of the EU institutions, key issues mentioned by Guardian journalists were the democratic deficit, the institutions' remoteness from citizens and the need for reform; 'the institutions should have meaning and public support and it's [the EU's] got to do something to win the hearts and minds of European people'⁵⁴. The Times correspondent saw the institutions as preparing for enlargement; changes he identified were more powers for the European Parliament and Council meetings becoming open to public scrutiny, although he also pointed out

⁵² European Editor, The Guardian, 29 July 2003.

⁵³ Brussels Correspondent, The Times, 14 July 2003.

⁵⁴ Home Affairs Editor, The Guardian, 30 May 2003.

that enlargement would be likely to lead to ‘more deals being struck outside the room’ in the Council⁵⁵.

vi. Overall national impression: all actors

There was a general recognition among the British actors interviewed that enlargement would present the EU with future challenges for effective decision making in a Europe of 25 states. In addition, state actors in particular cited the Convention on the Future of Europe as a crucial issue for the EU’s future. This can be ascribed to elites being strongly aware of the Convention and its implications for institutional reform, and also to the fact that two of our interviewees had recently represented the UK Parliament on the Convention. Other issues cited by interviewees as crucial in the EU’s near future were numerous, but particular attention was paid to British membership of the single currency, the completion of the single market, economic policy, foreign and defence issues and relations between the EU and the US.

Asked about the direction that European integration was taking, many interviewees identified that integration would take place at different speeds for different groups of EU states, whether they termed this a ‘core Europe’, ‘two-speed Europe’ or ‘enhanced cooperation’. Some state actors were particularly concerned to refute the idea that Europe would evolve in a federalist direction, reflecting the fact that a federal Europe has been an key issue of conflict in the elite debate on the European Union in Britain. Interest groups expressed more uncertainty regarding the future of Europe than did other actors, some arguing that the future was ‘grey’ and that ‘nobody knows which direction Europe’s taking’. The media actors interviewed from two broadsheet newspapers – The Guardian and The Times – gave particular consideration to the question of the EU’s democratic deficit and the relations between institutions and citizens. This seems likely to relate to journalists’ positions as mediators on European issues between EU and national politicians and institutions, on the one hand, and the public they represent, on the other.

⁵⁵ Brussels Correspondent, The Times, *ibid*.

There was no consensus on whether the coming period would be characterised by stability or stasis, incremental changes or seismic changes for the European Union. Some interviewees viewed the period post-enlargement as a time of relative stability for the EU (UK Independence Party). Others saw it as a time when gradual change would come about, and related this to a variety of developments. For example, a Liberal Democrat interviewee argued there would be incremental change in relation to the single currency issue, with the ‘economic logic’ of the euro meaning that the candidate countries and Britain would come into the euro gradually, while the Green Party interviewee held that relationships between member states would become increasingly difficult with enlargement, leading to a ‘gradual break between those countries which wish to integrate more and those who don’t’. Still other interviewees – in particular, some of the UK’s major interest groups - saw the coming period as a time of crisis, where the EU stood at a crossroads in regard to its future direction (CBI, National Farmers’ Union). The Eurosceptic NGOs interviewed forecast a difficult future for Europe, with the gap between elites and citizens on European issues becoming increasingly problematic, while pro-European NGOs discussed Europe’s future in terms of positive developments and the institutional reforms necessary for greater EU effectiveness.

There was little desire among UK political actors to move towards much greater political integration, notable exceptions being one interviewee from the TUC who personally favoured ‘deeper and deeper’ integration (though he thought it unlikely to come about), and the campaign group Federal Union, who advocate a federal future for the EU. A general consensus existed that the EU institutions needed to be reformed, with no interviewees making wholly positive comments about their performance. State actors focused particularly on the issue of accountability in relation to EU institutional reform, while media actors mentioned the issues of democracy and the institutions’ remoteness from citizens. Many interviewees held the view that the European Parliament would gain in influence in the coming years. Whether the Commission would also gain power in the near future was a moot point; some interviewees argued that it would maintain its strong influence, while others argued that it stood to lose from the Convention.

A final point is that, as argued in the analytic summary, a more important dividing line in the UK on the future of Europe appears to be between pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics, rather than between different types of political actor (state actors, political parties, interest groups, NGOs and media actors). The pro-European organisations interviewed generally agreed with European-level developments, although they called for institutional reform. In contrast, the Eurosceptic interviewees – most Conservative MPs, the UK Independence Party, the Green Party, research organisation New Europe and campaign group The Democracy Movement – were generally negative towards European-level developments. Many identified the gap between elites and citizens on European integration, and the democratic deficit, as areas of particular concern, and put forward alternative visions of a future for Europe as a union of cooperating states or a free trade area.

Appendix 1 List of interviewees and interview dates

European integration

Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Team Leader (Economic and Central Europe Team), European Union Directorate; 6 May 2003
UK Parliament (I); Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe; 22 Jul 2003
UK Parliament (II); Representative of UK Parliament to the Convention on the Future of Europe; 27 Oct 2003
House of Lords EU Scrutiny Committee; Chair; 27 Oct 2003
Labour Party; Assistant General Secretary, Labour Party Policy Unit; 8 May 2003
Conservative Party; Shadow Minister for Europe; 8 May 2003
Liberal Democrats; Foreign Affairs Adviser; 6 May 2003
UK Independence Party; Vice-Chairman; 6 May 2003
CBI; Senior Policy Adviser, European Affairs; 7 Oct 2003
TUC; Secretary, European Union & International Relations Department; 15 Jul 2003
Centre for European Reform; Director, Economics and Social Policy Unit; 9 May 2003
Federal Trust; Director; 4 May 2003
New Europe; Co-Director; 8 May 2003
Democracy Movement; Campaign Director; 4 Jun 2003
European Movement; Director; 7 May 2003
Federal Union; Director; 9 May 2003

Agriculture

UK Government Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Minister for Environment and Agri-Environment; 13 Aug 2003
House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Chair; 3 Jul 2003
Countryside Agency; Senior Policy Officer; 10 Jun 2003
English Nature; Manager (Agriculture); 9 Jun 2003
Labour Party; Parliamentary Undersecretary, Farming, Food, and Sustainable Energy; 27 Jun 2003
Liberal Democrats; Agriculture Spokesman/ Adviser on Rural & Cultural Affairs; 3 Jul 2003
Green Party; Agriculture Spokesman; 11 Jun 2003
National Farmers' Union; Policy Director; 12 Jun 2003
Country Land and Business Association; Director of Policy and Advisory Services; 17 Jun 2003
Meat & Livestock Commission; Director of Corporate Strategy; 9 Jun 2003
Small Farms Association; Director; 2 Jun 2003
Consumers' Association; EU Policy Adviser; 4 Jun 2003
Sustain; Policy Director; 17 Jun 2003
National Trust; Assistant Director (Policy); 17 Jun 2003
WWF; Rural Development Policy Officer; 24 Jun 2003

Immigration

Home Office Immigration & Nationality Directorate; Deputy Director General (Policy); 5 Dec 2003
National Asylum Support Service; Greater London, Deputy; 23 Oct 2003
Local Government Association Task Group on Asylum Seekers; National Asylum Liaison Officer; 20 Oct 2003
Liberal Democrats; Home Affairs Adviser; 31 Oct 2003
Trades Union Congress; Race Equality Officer; 10 Oct 2003
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association; Member, Executive Committee; 30 Oct 2003
Churches' Commission for Racial Justice; Commission Secretary; 3 Nov 2003

Refugee Council; Head of Policy; 6 Nov 2003
Amnesty International; UK Refugee Affairs Programme Director; 10 Oct 2003
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants; Chief Executive; 9 Oct 2003
Asylum Aid; Co-ordinator; 9 Oct 2003

Journalists

The Guardian; Chief Leader Writer; 4 Jun 2003
The Guardian; European Editor; 29 Jul 2003
The Guardian; Home Affairs Editor; 30 May 2003
The Guardian; Consumer Affairs Correspondent; 4 Jun 2003
The Times; Chief Leader Writer; 3 Jul 2003
The Times; Brussels Correspondent; 14 Jul 2003