

MEPS TO VOTE ON CONSTITUTION SALVAGE PLAN

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MEPs will this week debate a report that is aimed at salvaging the EU constitution, and forming a clear decision by the end of 2007 on how its core parts should be ratified despite last year's "no" votes in France and the Netherlands.

The two co-rapporteurs of the European Parliament's constitutional affairs committee, the UK liberal Andrew Duff and the Austrian Green Johannes Voggenhuber, on Friday (13 January) joined the choir of EU leaders expressing their opinion over the fate of the text since the beginning of this year.

The MEPs described the interventions so far as "simplistic" and presented instead a report setting out a specific roadmap for the resuscitation of the constitution in a revised form.

The Duff-Voggenhuber report, on which the parliament will vote on Thursday, proposes to intensify the so-called period of reflection on the constitution, agreed by EU leaders after French and Dutch voters rejected the text in referendums last year.

According to the plan, the European Parliament will this year and next year together with national parliaments promote a series of parliamentary forums, which the MEPs hope will be echoed by a series of national debates.

The reflection period should then be "brought to an end in the second half of 2007 with a clear decision how to proceed with the constitution".