

## THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. The European Union needs to move forward gain. Faced with an increasingly globalised political and economic environment, we need more effective tools to participate in shaping the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, with 27 member states and 494.6 million people, the old ways of governing the public goods shared by all citizens are no longer efficient. Not surprisingly, many citizens are losing trust and confidence in the European project. To ensure that Europe will continue its successful unification and serve the interests of its citizens, the European Union has to change.

2. The Constitutional Treaty, elaborated by the European Convention after listening to Europe's civil society and adopted unanimously by an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), was intended to improve Europe's governance and bring the institution closer to the citizens. The negative referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005 have interrupted the implementation of these intended improvements.

3. We are convinced that the negative vote was less a rejection of Europe as such, but an expression of dissatisfaction with the general state of affairs in Europe. Citizens did not feel that the proposed Constitutional Treaty would remedy institutional gridlock and give them the possibility to have a final word over the direction of policies pursued in the Union. Therefore, some have voted No because they hoped preserving sovereignty would empower nation states to defend their interests; other have stopped from endorsing the Treaty because they hoped it would lead to a better one. Furthermore, naming the Treaty "Constitution" has not been helpful. It has raised excessive hopes in some Member States and excessive fears in others. Times are not ripe for a European Constitution.

4. However, the need for reform is still pre-eminent. The problems spelled out in the Declaration of Laeken in 2001 and its mandate for drafting a reform agenda are still to be solved. We believe that on the Laeken questions there was and there is agreement among political elites and public opinion alike. This implies that although the form of the constitutional Treaty is no longer appropriate, the substance of the reform project proposed by the Convention in response to the Laeken Declaration is still valid: defining the competences of the EU, simplifying its instruments, improving transparency, efficiency and democracy.

5. The European Council in June should convene a new Intergovernmental Conference to be held before the end of 2007, with the clear and stringent mandate to stipulate a simplified Treaty preserving the innovations on which all Governments have already agreed and with a view of ratifying it in all Member States before the European Parliament elections in 2009. Each Government will choose the adequate way to represent citizens' will. ✓

6. The new Treaty has to be as short and accessible as possible. To guarantee legibility and shortness, the innovations of Part III should not be included in the new text but be transformed into amendments to the existing Treaty establishing the European Community by means of protocols. ✓

7. Since the Constitutional Treaty was negotiated, it has become apparent that a number of other issues could be tackled more efficiently at the European level, because relevant decisions will affect all European citizens together. Thus, in the interest of citizens, the European Council could consider to broaden the mandate of the new IGC to include all or some of the following issues:

- Mastering the challenge of Climate change
- Improving Citizens' Security (external: defence; internal: terrorism)
- ✓ ○ Promoting Common Social Policies
- Enforcing Citizens' Right for information
- Adding the Copenhagen Criteria for future enlargements to the Treaty
- Strengthening the surveillance mechanism for the implementation of EU policies
- Clarifying the role of the European Parliament in enhanced cooperations.

8. The Laeken Declaration explicitly stated the long-term option of a future Constitution for the European Union. We appeal to the European Council to maintain such option and to keep the door open to its implementation by envisaging the necessary steps jointly with the European Parliament.

9. The Action Committee for European Democracy intends to be helpful in supporting the governments of the Member States in the difficult process of the incoming months. The Committee is well aware that our citizens want a more effective Union. But institutional reforms are not an alternative to more effective results. On the contrary, they are the foundation on which better policies depend and have to be built.

Signed