

Declaration by the Heads of State or Government on the ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (Brussels, 16 and 17 June 2005)

Caption: At the meeting of the European Council of 16 and 17 June 2005, the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the European Union decide to institute a period of general reflection on the worries and concerns expressed at the time of the referendums in France and the Netherlands and agree to adapt, where necessary, the timetable for ratification, without necessarily questioning the validity of continuing the process.

Source: Declaration by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the European Union on the ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (European Council, 16 and 17 June 2005), SN 117/05. Brussels: Council of the European Union, 18.06.2005.

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Declaration by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the European Union on the ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (European Council, 16 and 17 June 2005)

We have held a wide-ranging review of the process of ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. This Treaty is the fruit of a collective process, designed to provide the appropriate response to ensure that an enlarged European Union functions more democratically, more transparently and more effectively.

Our European ambition, which has served us so well for over 50 years and which has allowed Europe to unite around the same vision, remains more relevant than ever. It has enabled us to ensure the well-being of citizens, the defence of our values and our interests, and to assume our responsibilities as a leading international player. In order to fight unemployment and social exclusion more effectively, to promote sustainable economic growth, to respond to the challenges of globalisation, to safeguard internal and external security, and to protect the environment, we need Europe, a more united Europe presenting greater solidarity.

To date, 10 Member States have successfully concluded ratification procedures, thereby expressing their commitment to the Constitutional Treaty. We have noted the outcome of the referendums in France and the Netherlands. We consider that these results do not call into question citizens' attachment to the construction of Europe. Citizens have nevertheless expressed concerns and worries which need to be taken into account. Hence the need for us to reflect together on this situation.

This period of reflection will be used to enable a broad debate to take place in each of our countries, involving citizens, civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties. This debate, designed to generate interest, which is already under way in many Member States, must be intensified and broadened. The European institutions will also have to make their contribution, with the Commission playing a special role in this regard.

The recent developments do not call into question the validity of continuing with the ratification processes. We are agreed that the timetable for the ratification in different Member States will be altered if necessary in response to these developments and according to the circumstances in these Member States.

We have agreed to come back to this matter in the first half of 2006 to make an overall assessment of the national debates and agree on how to proceed.