

THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. The mission of the **Action Committee for European Democracy** (ACED) is to contribute to the debate on Europe's political prospects, fostering a new consensus on how Europe can master its future. The structure and the content of our contribution for a new Treaty reflects the aim of finding the necessary balance between the reasons of those who have ratified the constitutional Treaty and the difficulties that the Treaty has met in some of our countries. We, as engaged citizens, independent experts, and on the basis of our political experience, our engagement in the institutional debate and knowledge of Member States, are convinced that this balance can be reached without reducing the ambitions of the reforms that the Union badly needs to the benefit for its citizens and without ignoring the objections raised.
2. The European Union needs to move forward to continue its great success in delivering peace, stability and prosperity, which it has pursued for the last fifty years. Faced with an increasingly globalised political and economic environment, we need more effective tools to participate in shaping the world of the 21st century. Furthermore, the European Union of 27 Member States has to become more responsive and participatory for its 495 million citizens to meet their expectations and to increase their trust in a democratic Union. To ensure that Europe will continue its successful integration and serve the interests of its citizens, the European Union has to improve its policies and institutions.
3. 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. This mission remains to be accomplished. Despite the drawbacks that have led to a period of reflection, the fact that the ratification process never really stopped cannot be neglected.
4. During the reflection period European citizens and governments continued to express their support for a broader European reform project. The phase of reflection has been useful in making clear which solutions for a more democratic, transparent, and effective Union are at stake and how costly the consequences of missing this chance for reform would be. In turn, it has also provided a period for review and re-definition of positions and thereby increased the understanding among divergent views in order to prepare the ground for a common answer to the shared challenges we face in the EU.
5. The need for reform is still pre-eminent. The problems spelled out in the *Declaration of Laeken* in 2001 and its mandate to provide answers to the reform agenda are still to be settled. This implies that although the form of the constitutional Treaty is not considered appropriate by many, the substance of the reforms proposed by the Convention in response to the Laeken Declaration is valid: defining the competences of the European Union, giving it a single legal personality and thereby enhancing its role as a global actor, simplifying its instruments, improving transparency, efficiency and democracy, and involving national Parliaments.

6. Therefore, the European Council on 21/22 June should adopt a clear and stringent mandate to enable an IGC to be successfully concluded before the end of 2007, with a view to ratifying the new Treaty in all Member States before the European Parliament elections in 2009. The Action Committee for European Democracy encourages the Member States to coordinate the national ratification procedures, in order to allow the ratification process to be completed in good time and to stimulate a real European-wide debate. Each Government will choose the appropriate way to represent the will of its citizens.

7. The new Treaty has to be concise, accessible and readable. Our contribution tries to demonstrate that this is feasible. It does so by distinguishing between a short Treaty with the essential reforms, and a first added protocol with the subsequent technical modifications to the existing treaties, and a second protocol with the modifications for delivering policies. These have to be ratified as one comprehensive package.

8. Since the Constitutional Treaty was being negotiated, the world has kept changing. Five years have passed and new challenges that were not considered at the time have come to the fore, other relevant issues will arise in the coming years. The new IGC could be a chance to assess whether the Union has the instruments to effectively tackle these new challenges, such as climate change and energy policy.

9. The Action Committee for European Democracy intends to be helpful in supporting the Governments of the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission in the difficult process of the coming 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.

10. We have to learn the lessons of the period of reflection: communicating better with the citizens, informing them fully about the initiatives and the work of the European Union and involving them in a real and permanent dialogue has to become the first of our missions.

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