



European Union: No Alternative to the Constitution

Critical Dialogue about Content and Style of EU Policies is Needed

Decision of the 9th Congress of the EUCDW, 03.09.2005

The process of European unification has no alternative: the European Union is a mighty force for the peaceful co-existence of nations and the defence of democracy, liberty and prosperity. It also represents the only way for its member states to add weight to their demands and interests in an increasingly globalised world.

The European Union, however, cannot be stable as long as it rests on a single pillar, the Single European Market: it needs to be developed into a full political Union. Such a development requires the social union to be strengthened – and the entire body of European policies to be guided by generally binding fundamental values. A union of member states must be complemented by a union of citizens.

It is precisely with these aims in mind that the European Constitution was conceived. It intends to strengthen the citizens' rights, democratic legitimisation and the control of decision-making processes on the European level through

1. the creation of a legal link between European politics and the Charter of Fundamental Rights,
2. expressing the commitment of the EU to the Social Market Economy and the objectives of full employment, social protection and stable prices,
3. involvement of the European Parliament in all areas of legislation, including those areas from which it has been so far excluded,
4. the obligation of admitting the public to the decision-making meetings of the Council of Ministers,
5. strengthening the rights of national Parliaments by providing them with the right to file legal suits against alleged transgressions of EU competences and violations of the subsidiarity principle.

This is why no alternatives to the European Constitution are in existence.

Any attempt to keep on muddling through on the basis of the existing Treaty of Nice is based on a gross misconception. After all, it was exactly this behemoth of compiled regulations that had caused the anger to grow against the EU, its bureaucracy and finally its political classes. After all, 11 countries have already voted “Yes” following intense debates.

But of course, the “No” votes need to be taken seriously. They force us to subject not only the process of Constitutional voting, but also the entire body of European policies to a thorough and stringent test:

- European legislation must be able to pass the threefold test: subsidiarity, cost-effectiveness and more competitiveness.
- The EU must also face and define the limits of enlargement and accept the fact that the Union cannot absorb unlimited numbers of new member states.
- Only a strong and vigorous Europe will be capable of benefiting its citizens and of defending our interests in the wider world.
- The EU must be an element of our response to the globalisation issue.

We shall also have to return to the Constitution itself and reread it with a critical mind. Does it really serve to clarify our vision of a value-based political union?

At any rate, we shall have to ensure that the fundamental objectives and values of the Constitution (which are based on Christian principles) – Part I (60 Articles) and Part II (Charter of Fundamental Rights) – will be clearly distinguished from the summary of the old treaties in Part III (321 Articles). The EUCDW maintains its criticism that Part III – in clear conflict with the intentions of the two largest political groups in the EU Convent – failed to extend the authority of the EU into the area of social policies.

The period of reflection that has now begun provides the opportunity for a real dialogue. At the very least, the EU Constitution has triggered an EU-wide discussion among people from all walks of life about the type of EU we really want.

This discussion will need to include a fair amount of criticism. Firstly, it will serve to improve the communication between the EU institutions and the European citizens. Secondly, it will require European policies to change in style and content. A mere change of packaging will not be enough to convince the European citizens of the common European purpose – never mind fill them with enthusiasm for the vision of European unification.

The EUCDW supports the Constitution in its main objective of developing the EU into a “Europe of Citizens”. The EU is the most cost-effective guarantee for peace, liberty and prosperity. It will fail if public debates continue to reduce it to a mere weapon for domestic political battles.

Only when the European citizens can recognize these values and objectives of the Union in the actual political decisions of the day – rather than finding them reflected only in the language of the Constitution – will we be able to ask them again for their approval of this project.