

## EU Constitution Newsletter

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Since the Intergovernmental Conference came to an agreement on the EU Constitution the focus of the debate has shifted to the challenge of ratifying this constitution. This monthly newsletter will monitor the debate, events and developments surrounding the ratification process in all 25 member states. It will offer a particular UK perspective of this process and provide a forum for differing views on the debate.

Back issues are available at [www.fedtrust.co.uk/constitution\\_newsletter](http://www.fedtrust.co.uk/constitution_newsletter).

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### 1. Editorial

#### What to do after the 'non' and the 'nee'

Quick and positive action is urgently required, both to stabilise the Union and to set it again on a course of constructive development. The British Presidency in the second half of the year will have a great responsibility, and at the same time a great opportunity, to make a vital contribution to the Union's healthy progress.

The British government will no doubt want to press for reforms in the direction of what the French call 'Anglo-Saxon liberalism'. Such reforms are certainly in the general interest, including that of the French, who are unlikely to reduce their unemployment much below its steady state of around 10 per cent, with 20 per cent for those under twenty five, unless hiring people becomes more attractive to employers. But there will be better prospects for agreement on reforms if the Union is also taking in other fields action that is welcome to the member states and the European citizens, including particularly the Dutch and the French.

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...is a think tank that studies the interactions between regional, national, European and global levels of government.

Founded in 1945 on the initiative of Sir William Beveridge, it has long made a powerful contribution to the study of federalism and federal systems.

## 2. Overview of 25

<b>Austria</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 25 May through parliament. On 12 May, the lower house (Nationalrat) approved the Constitution with 182 to 1 in favour. In the upper house (Bundesrat), the Constitution passed with 59 to 3 votes in favour. This made Austria the eighth country to fully ratify the Constitution.
<b>Belgium</b>	The ratification process has begun, with the lower house of the Belgian Parliament approving the Constitution on 19 May with 118 votes in favour, 18 against and one abstention. The upper house approved the Constitution on 29 April with 54 votes in favour, 9 against and one abstention. Ratification now moves to Belgium's federal bodies, where five further votes are required for full ratification.
<b>Cyprus</b>	Ratification through parliament is planned. The vote has been scheduled for 30 June.
<b>Czech Republic</b>	A referendum is planned. The CSSD, the current ruling party, wants to hold the referendum in conjunction with the general election planned for June 2006. The new prime minister has reaffirmed the government's commitment to a referendum. No law allowing a referendum has yet been passed. Recent opinion polls indicate a clear lead for the 'yes' camp.
<b>Denmark</b>	A binding referendum is scheduled for 27 September. Most of the main parties, including the usually Eurosceptic Socialist People's Party, will support ratification. Among significant parties, only the Danish People's Party and the Red-Green Alliance oppose the Constitution. In recent opinion polls the trend has reversed and now shows a lead for the 'no' camp, with two thirds of respondents in favour of going ahead with the referendum.
<b>Estonia</b>	Ratification through parliament is planned
<b>Finland</b>	Ratification through parliament is planned for late 2005/early 2006.
<b>France</b>	Rejected the EU Constitution on 29 May in a referendum with 54.68 per cent against and 45.32 per cent in favour. Turnout was 69.34 per cent.
<b>Germany</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 27 May through parliament. The lower house (Bundestag) approved the Constitution with 569 to 23 in favour, with two abstentions. The Constitution passed the upper house (Bundesrat) with approval from all federal states except Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which abstained. This made Germany the ninth country to fully ratify the Constitution.
<b>Greece</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 19 April by a parliamentary vote with 268 to 17 in favour. 285 of the 300 Greek deputies took part in the vote, with ratification supported by both main parties, Nea Demokratia and PASOK. Greece is the fifth country fully to ratify the Constitution.
<b>Hungary</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 20 December 2004 by a parliamentary vote with 322 to 12 in favour and eight abstentions, easily achieving the necessary two-thirds majority. Hungary was the second member state to ratify the EU Constitution.
<b>Ireland</b>	A binding referendum is planned, the timing of which is still unclear. It may take place in late 2005/early 2006. On 26 May, the relevant amendment of the Irish Constitution was published. The Irish government has announced a full White Paper on the referendum as well as an information campaign to improve awareness of the Constitution.
<b>Italy</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 6 April, with 217 votes for and 16 against in the Senate. On 25 January, the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian parliament had ratified the EU Constitution by a majority of 436 in favour, 28 against and five abstentions. This made Italy the fourth country fully to ratify the Constitution.
<b>Latvia</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 2 June by a parliamentary vote with 71 votes in favour and 5 against. This made Latvia the tenth country to ratify the Constitution.
<b>Lithuania</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 11 November 2004 by a parliamentary vote with 84 to four in favour, with three abstentions. This made Lithuania the first country to ratify the text.
<b>Luxembourg</b>	A referendum is planned for 10 July, immediately after Luxembourg's EU Presidency. The Chamber of Deputies will vote on draft legislation on the ratification of the EU Constitution in June, which will then need to be approved by the binding referendum. The most recent opinion polls from early May show around 46 per cent in favour, 32 per cent against and 22 per cent undecided.
<b>Malta</b>	Ratification through parliament is planned for mid-July.
<b>Netherlands</b>	Rejected the EU Constitution in a non-binding referendum on 1 June with 61.6 per cent against and 38.4 per cent in favour. Turnout was 62.8 per cent.
<b>Poland</b>	A referendum is planned. Prime Minister Marek Belka has argued for a referendum to be held together with the first round of the presidential elections, scheduled for 9 October. This would make the fifty per cent turnout required for ratification almost certain. Polls have shown a majority of Poles currently in favour of ratification.
<b>Portugal</b>	A referendum is planned, possibly on 2 or 9 October in conjunction with municipal elections. An amendment to the national Constitution necessary for a referendum to take place has been agreed. In a poll published on 29 May 2005, 54.5 per cent said they would vote in favour and just 7.3 per cent against.
<b>Slovakia</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 11 May by a parliamentary vote with 116 to 27 in favour, with 4 abstentions. Slovakia was the sixth member state to fully ratify the EU Constitution.
<b>Slovenia</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 1 February by a parliamentary vote with 79 to 4 in favour and 7 abstentions, easily reaching the necessary two-thirds majority. Slovenia was the third member state to ratify the EU Constitution.
<b>Spain</b>	Ratified the EU Constitution on 18 May. In the non-binding referendum on 20 February, 76.7 per cent voted for the Constitution and 17.2 per cent against. The turnout was 43.3 per cent. The Constitution was ratified by the lower house of the Spanish parliament on 28 April, with 311 votes in favour and 19 against, and by the upper house on 18 May, with 225 votes for and 6 against.
<b>Sweden</b>	Ratification through parliament is planned. The vote is planned for December. No referendum will be held after an agreement last year between Social-Democrat PM Göran Persson and four right-wing opposition parties that parliamentary ratification will suffice, although on 22 March a petition calling for a referendum signed by over 120,000 Swedes was handed to the government.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	On 6 June Foreign Minister Jack Straw announced that the government would postpone indefinitely the parliamentary process of the 'European Union Bill', which would have paved the way for a referendum to be held in 2006.

While most of the discontent in both France and the Netherlands related to the economic and social fields, there is broad European consensus in much of the sphere of the Union's external relations. The European Council adopted in December 2003 a strategy paper which concluded by affirming that we need 'an active and capable EU' to make an 'impact on a global scale' and thus contribute to 'an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world.' This corresponds to what surveys show to be a prevalent aspiration among citizens of the Union's member states. The French in particular are deeply anxious, in the context of rapid globalisation, about the extent and the consequences of an American hegemony which runs counter to the aims expressed in the Union's strategy paper.

While the habit of deference to American wishes is deeply ingrained in much of the British establishment, this tends to go beyond what is required for reasonably co-operative behaviour; and the British government's relations with large swathes of domestic public opinion would benefit from action to establish a more equal partnership. Thus there is a powerful case for a substantial further strengthening of the Union's capacity in the field of security, both hard and soft, on terms that would satisfy common European interests, including those of both the French and British. Particularly the latter would benefit from being reminded of the specific contribution the Union can make in this area.

With the clear desire of a reelected George W. Bush to establish better relations with the Europeans, and the evident dangers associated with a Union in disarray, it should be possible for the US Administration to realise that the consequences of building a more balanced relationship in this way would be in the American interest too.

An initiative in this field could include acceleration of the process of making the Rapid Reaction Force and an increasing number of battle groups operationally effective. The existence of such EU forces ready to act in co-

operation with, but not subordinate to, NATO is not only in the European interest but, with American forces subject to overstretch, surely also in that of the United States.

In parallel with such contributions in the field of hard security, the Union should considerably strengthen its ability to contribute to the civilian aspect of peace-keeping and state-building, including the establishment of the Rapid Reaction Facility for action in countries where this is urgently required; and that should be seen as an element in building up the Union's already extensive capacity to assist the development of robust democracies and healthy market economies in countries where these are in the process of development.

There is also great need for a European initiative in the field of climate change. The EU was the leader in securing the Kyoto Protocol, as a first step towards tackling the vast problem of global warming; and the European Council has agreed that the Union should go much further, cutting its CO2 emissions by 60-80 per cent by mid-century. But this will not prevent catastrophic climate change unless it is done by a critical mass of countries in both the North and the South of the world; and only the Union has the weight and the commitment required to lead the way in crating a substantial vanguard group. It is not to be expected that the US would join in the first instance, just as the UK initially stood aside from the European Community; but close association should be envisaged meanwhile. The development of such a policy could also be initiated during the British Presidency.

France might prefer to seek leadership with Germany in establishing a core group within the Union. But Germany may not be inclined to do that after France has reneged on the constitutional treaty. A package of initiative in these fields, as well as others such as internal security, would help to strengthen the Union at a critical juncture and could well be attractive to France and Germany, as well as the Netherlands and other member states. Should Britain then revert to a more

negative approach to the Union, the attraction of a core group without the UK could prevail. But a Union that becomes the mainspring in creating an effective multilateral system to promote global security and welfare as well as in making the United Nations more effective could attract the support of citizens in Britain as well as partner states to an extent that would enable the Union to continue its development as a united whole.

John Pinder  
Chairman,  
The Federal Trust

### A tale of two cities

In recent days, the British media have been delighted to discover that the two leading candidates to host the Olympic Games of 2012 are London and Paris. This rivalry comes to a head at a time of political tension between the French and British governments. The eager hope of British journalists will be that international sport and international politics combine into a potent cocktail of lurid headlines.

It would be pleasant to believe that the French and British governments will resist any temptation to embroil themselves in the eminently sporting question of the city to welcome the Olympic Games in seven years time. Unfortunately, the recent history of both governments suggests otherwise. Reciprocal resentments fester on both sides of the Channel, all the more strongly in that both parties have good grounds for complaint against each other.

At the personal level, both Mr. Blair and Mr. Chirac nurse a long catalogue of grievances. Mr. Blair wilfully misrepresented Mr. Chirac's policy on Iraq; he allowed himself to be panicked into a referendum on the European Constitution, thus forcing Mr. Chirac to do likewise; he has now shown indecent haste in postponing this referendum, without waiting for consultation with his colleagues in the European Council. Mr. Chirac for his part frequently embarrasses Mr. Blair by calling into question the British budgetary rebate; he tries to distance himself from the

enlargement of the European Union which he himself helped to bring about; and his insistence that the ratification process for the Constitutional Treaty is a transparent attempt to divert attention from his central role in losing the referendum in his own country.

In the not too distant future, both Mr. Blair and Mr. Chirac will be leaving the political scene. It may be that their successors can establish better personal and political relationships. But quite apart from the animosities specific to Mr. Blair and Mr. Chirac, they risk leaving to their successors a yet more damaging legacy, that of a grossly overdrawn conflict between the 'social' model of Europe supposedly represented by France, and the 'Anglo-Saxon' model of Europe supposedly represented by the United Kingdom. That there are differences between these models is not in doubt. But for internal political reasons both governments have deliberately exaggerated these differences, and claimed into the bargain that the European Union had definitively to opt for one or other.

In the murky genesis of this controversy, the British Chancellor, Gordon Brown, plays a leading part. One element in the Labour government's double game on the euro for the past eight years has been to proclaim itself willing to join the single currency, provided that the existing members of the Eurozone became more 'economically flexible'. The Lisbon agenda was originally hailed by the British government as proof that the European Union was following the British economic lead. Its modest results are now presented as proof of the incapacity of stagnant European economies to reform themselves. This in its turn becomes a further justification for Britain's not joining the euro. The British government has succumbed, in its European as in other policies, to the danger of believing its own rhetoric.

Two misconceptions underlie the current confused Franco-British polemic, misconceptions apparently shared by politicians on both sides of the Channel. The first is that the British economy, in diametric contrast to the French

economy, is constructed on strictly American lines, with only minimal levels of social protection and ruthless labour laws which allow hiring and firing at will. The second is that the European Union should be committed to one and only one economic model, with a Darwinian struggle currently being conducted which must inevitably lead to the victory of either the social or liberal Europe. Neither proposition survives any serious examination.

Nobody who has ever worked in the British economy can be unaware of the high level of employment protection given to those economically active within it. Partly in response to European legislation, British workers' rights in such areas as parental leave, maternity pay, paid holidays and working hours have in recent years been greatly enhanced. Controversy over such issues as partial opt-outs from some elements of European legislation should not conceal the greater reality that in its employment law, as in its social provision, Britain is squarely at the European and not at the American end of the spectrum of economic culture. This Labour government which likes so much to present itself as an apostle of trans-Atlantic economic approaches has enormously increased during its tenure of office the national resources devoted to public services, notably to the governmentally-controlled National Health Service. Many of the Labour Party's most loyal domestic supporters regret that their government does not do more to publicise its generous (according to critics, over-generous) deployment of public funds.

But it is the second misconception in Franco-British controversy which is in some ways the more damaging, the intolerant misconception which claims that the European Union has room for only one economic model. Whether this claim comes from the liberal or the social end of the spectrum, it must be rejected with equal vigour. An enlarged European Union in particular must allow within its ranks significant deviations from the economic and social average. The reciprocal obloquy heaped on the British and French economic models by the opposing zealots would be

inappropriate even if the social and economic differences between France and the United Kingdom were much greater than they are. In the objective circumstances in which we find ourselves, such polemic is petulant and absurd.

At a time of crisis generated by the French and Dutch referendum results, the European Union cannot afford a self-indulgent and grossly exaggerated vendetta between two of its leading members. The International Olympic Committee can decide to take the Olympic Games to Madrid or even to New York. The European Union, however, cannot now function without a constructive relationship between France and the United Kingdom. The rest of the Union should avoid being drawn into their fruitless bickering. The Union's real problems are already too serious to permit the luxury of pursuing artificial ones.

Brendan Donnelly  
The Federal Trust

### 3. News from the Institutions

After the 'no' vote in France, the reaction in Brussels was unanimous: the ratification process must continue. In a joint statement given on the night of the referendum, the President of the European Parliament Josep Borrell, the President of the European Council Jean-Claude Juncker and the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso told the press that they 'regret' the choice of the French electorate and that the result deserves a 'profound analysis'. However, they argued that all member states must be given the opportunity to complete the ratification process. At the press conference, Juncker argued that 'the Treaty is not dead' and excluded the possibility that there could be any form of renegotiation. Borrell said that 'it would be a grave mistake to suspend the ratification process...France has only decided for France, even if it is an important country.'

Juncker could detect no clear message for Europe from the French

vote, as there were several conceptions of Europe that emerged during the debate. 'What kind of no is this? Who has won?' he asked rhetorically, adding that French opposition to the Constitution was divided between those who wanted deeper integration and those who wanted to tear up the existing treaties.

Three days later, after the result of the Dutch referendum became known, Mr Juncker once again addressed the European press. His main message was unchanged. 'There are an impressive number of contradictory reasons why the 'no' vote won. The arguments used by the 'no' voters in France had already contradicted each other. Now, another list of no less contradictory arguments has been added to this already large collection of contradictory reasons for saying 'no'.' He also argued again that the ratification process needed to continue, so that all countries have a chance to express their opinion on the Constitution. Mr Juncker however admitted, on a more pessimistic note about the future of the EU, that 'there is no denying this evening that the European union doesn't inspire people anymore.' He added, 'the EU in its current form is no longer popular.'

The European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee arranged an extraordinary meeting on 2 June to discuss the consequences of the 'no' votes in the presence of Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström and several representatives of national parliaments. The majority of committee members spoke out in favour of continuing the ratification process, while stressing the Parliament's responsibility not to ignore the clear message of disapproval voiced by the public. Mrs Wallström, Commissioner in charge of communication, admitted that European integration was a project of political elites and proposed a 'Plan D', standing for democracy, to address this problem.

The decision on how to proceed will now be discussed at the European Council on 16 and 17 June. In the meantime different views on the best way forward have emerged from member states. Both Germany's

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and French President Jacques Chirac have been outspoken with a message in support of continuing the ratification process. The UK however apparently wants the process suspended. Amid these differing positions Commission President Barroso insisted that any decision on the future of the Constitution must be made collectively: 'Any unilateral initiative before the Brussels summit must be avoided. The Constitutional Treaty was signed collectively, so we have to examine the situation collectively'.

It is clear that the French and Dutch votes will have repercussions for other issues currently debated at the EU level. There are fears that it will become very difficult to reach agreement on sensitive issues, with member states aware of the fact that they need to be seen to be defending national interests in the negotiations. In particular there are concerns that France will now oppose even more decisively the more liberalising ambitions of the Lisbon Agenda, such as the 'services directive'. Given the significant role the issue played in both France and the Netherlands, Turkish accession is also more in doubt than before. However, on the EU budget, another very controversial topic on the forthcoming agenda, Chancellor Schröder has signalled willingness to compromise, emphasising that 'now is not the time for national egoism'.

Markus Wagner,  
Ulrike Rüb  
The Federal Trust

[Press statement by Juncker, Borrell and Barroso on 29 May](#)

[Press statement by Juncker, Borrell and Barroso on 1 June](#)

[Press statement by Juncker on 1 June](#)

#### 4. The UK Debate

The past month has produced two significant developments for Britain's position within the European Union. Towards the end of the General Election campaign, the government strongly hinted that, if re-elected, it did not expect

to join the single European currency during its coming term of office; and on 6<sup>th</sup> June, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, told the House of Commons that the government was postponing indefinitely a promised referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty. When made, neither announcement was particularly surprising. Nevertheless, each represented in its own way a culminating point in the gradual reversal of the government's proclaimed European policies.

Since its election to government in 1997, the policy of New Labour towards the euro had always been grounded in ambiguity. It refused to rule out joining the single currency, but it made clear that it was in no rush to do so. This had the tactical advantage of allowing the government to criticise its political opponents either for their dogmatic refusal ever to join the single currency (the Conservatives) or for their excessive eagerness to participate in the euro block (the Liberals.) It also provided a workable formula to encompass the differing attitudes of the Prime Minister and his Chancellor, whose personal and political rivalry has shaped the entire course of British policy towards the single currency since 1997.

Many commentators have speculated that the renunciation of any aspiration to join the euro in this present Parliament was a gesture of goodwill by the Prime Minister towards the Chancellor, his likely successor. It came, however, as something of a shock to the dwindling band of British enthusiasts for the single European currency. Many of them had believed that a successful referendum on the European Constitution might usher in a further successful referendum, this time on British membership of the euro. In the event, the abandonment by the government of a referendum on the single currency was a precursor to its abandonment of a referendum on the European Constitution.

Ever since its re-election in early May, the British government had become increasingly despondent about its ability to win any referendum on the European Constitution. The General Election had

shown widespread discontent with and distrust of the Prime Minister: only the weakness of the main opposition party and the peculiarities of the British electoral system had ensured a stable Parliamentary majority for the Labour Party. Moreover, the whole question of the European referendum in 2006 had become entangled with that of Mr. Blair's likely retirement in favour of Mr. Brown. The government's Parliamentary supporters seemed much more preoccupied with the question of whether Mr. Blair's resignation would precede or succeed the referendum than with the referendum's eventual result. The background for winning in 2006 the referendum which Mr. Straw had persuaded the Prime Minister to promise in 2004 seemed bleak indeed.

The double rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands was therefore welcome to the government in giving it a powerful argument for postponing indefinitely any European referendum in this country. It is undoubtedly true that unless and until the French and Dutch electorates vote again (and this time positively) on the Treaty, a successful referendum on the Treaty is inconceivable. Some surprise has been expressed that the British government moved so quickly to signal its official postponement of next year's referendum, and its unofficial belief that the Treaty is now dead. The government's absolute pessimism about its ability to win this referendum is certainly part of the explanation for the hasty change from its original insistence that it would wait for the June European Council before taking any decision.

There is, however, another thought in the government's mind as well. With Mr. Chirac rejected by the French voters and Mr. Schroeder probably about to leave office, Mr. Blair believes that he is now in a position to secure for the United Kingdom a leading position within the European Union. He hopes to use this month's European Council and the succeeding British Presidency of the European Union to advance this agenda. If he were successful in this aspiration, it would be an ironic unintended consequence of the French and Dutch referendums. French voters

were protesting in their referendum against enlargement of the European Union and liberal economics, causes both of which the British government has vociferously championed. In the Netherlands, voters were protesting against enlargement and the high Dutch contribution to the European budget, widely seen as caused by the British budgetary rebate. It is not at all clear that the results of these two referendums genuinely strengthen Mr. Blair's or Britain's position within the European Union.

Brendan Donnelly  
The Federal Trust

## 5. Countries of the Month

### France

#### *French politics after May 29*

On 29 May, French voters rejected the European Constitution. With 54.7 per cent casting their ballot against ratification and a high turnout of over 69 per cent, the result was unambiguous. The message, however, was not, and the hours after the vote were taken up with French politicians taking turns at proclaiming their interpretation of the referendum. It soon became clear that both opponents and supporters of ratification argued that the lessons from this referendum should be primarily national rather than European.

In a televised intervention only minutes after the polls had closed, President Chirac claimed that he had understood the voters' concerns and worries and would respond by giving the actions of his government renewed vigour. What shape this new impulse would take was clear: Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin would have to resign after three unhappy years in Matignon. His replacement became known to the French public on Tuesday 31 May: Dominique de Villepin, interior minister in the Raffarin government, would take over.

Nicolas Sarkozy, head of Chirac's UMP party and France's most popular right-wing politician, was to enter government as the new minister of the interior and second man in the new cabinet. He will also be allowed to

remain the leader of the UMP, although he had originally been forced by Chirac to abandon his post as finance minister when taking up the position at the UMP. Chirac is apparently no longer in a position to make Sarkozy bow to his demands. Sarkozy's reaction to the referendum result was also different to Chirac's, with a forceful Sarkozy arguing that the correct response to the vote should be 'innovative, courageous and ambitious' action to counteract the fears of the French public.

Chirac's weakened position is paralleled by the disarray within the Socialist Party (PS) which, divided by the referendum, has blamed the government for the defeat of the Constitution. On the night of the vote, party leader François Hollande argued that the French had used the vote as an opportunity to express their 'anger and exasperation' at the actions of the President and his government. The 'no' vote was, in his eyes, primarily a reaction to high unemployment and an unsatisfactory social and economic situation. M. Hollande also suggested that disunity within the Socialist Party contributed to the rejection of the Constitution. He has since taken his revenge on his opponents within the party by excluding their leader, Laurent Fabius, from his post as Deputy Leader of the PS.

Nevertheless, Fabius is one of the big winners of this campaign. A TNS-Sofres exit poll for *Le Monde* shows that voters see him as the person who has been most strengthened by the outcome of the referendum. The other clear winners of this campaign are Jean-Marie Le Pen and his National Front. Indeed, the National Front is widely seen as resurgent after a divisive period following the 2002 elections. The extreme left is another big winner of the vote, with the Communist Party (PCF) able to claim renewed relevance in the French political landscape. This referendum has led to a strengthening of extreme and marginal forces in France at the expense of mainstream, governmental parties and has to be seen as a third anti-elite vote after the national elections in 2002 and the local and European elections in 2004.

## Who voted 'no', and why?

Although the issue of the French referendum was the European Constitution, the reaction to the referendum result is striking for the extent to which it was interpreted in national terms. The left saw it as a punishment for the government's social and economic policy, while the right promised to heed the message of the people and change its national policies accordingly. De Villepin has so far stressed his commitment to reducing unemployment rather than the need to reconcile France with the EU. Considering the motivations of French voters, this political reaction is arguably correct: the result of the referendum is indeed the reflection of France's economic problems and government unpopularity.

Three different camps of voters formed the main opposition to the Constitution. First, the extreme right voted nearly unanimously against ratification. Of the 15 million people who cast their ballot against ratification, around a third probably came from extreme right voters. Second, the extreme left was equally successful at persuading its supporters to vote 'no'. Finally, the moderate left was split, with a majority of the supporters of the PS and the Greens voting 'no' in spite of those parties' recommendation to approve the Constitution. The make-up of the 'no' camp has thus reversed in the thirteen years since the vote on the Maastricht Treaty, when it was the left that supported ratification with a centre-right split down the middle.

Sociologically, 'no' voters were predominantly working-class, with 79 per cent of blue-collar workers and 67 per cent of white-collar employees saying 'no' to the Constitution, while rural areas were also clear in their rejection of the document. Supporters of the Constitution, on the other hand, were to be found mainly among the highly educated, urban elite. The group that arguably swung the result was the middle class: in the 1992 vote on Maastricht, 62 per cent of middle-class voters had cast their ballot in favour of ratification; in 2005, 53 per cent of them said 'no'.

It has been suggested that the reasons for voting against the Constitution varied widely, leading many commentators to argue that there were as many 'no's as there were 'no' voters. However, the main motivation for the French public was clearly the economic situation at home. At 46 per cent, the most frequently given reason for voting 'no' was thus the fear that the Constitution would make the unemployment problem worse. Forty per cent of voters also said that they simply wanted to express their frustration with the current situation. 34 per cent said that they thought that the Constitution was too liberal, with only 20 per cent saying that Turkish accession was a major reason for rejecting the Treaty. However, *Libération* notes that 49 per cent of voters thought that there were too many foreigners in France - and 67 per cent of these voted 'no'. The vote thus seems to have been the result of a combination of economic and social anger and malaise. French voters are frustrated and are not afraid to vent this frustration at the ballot box.

Markus Wagner  
The Federal Trust

[President Chirac's declaration on 29 May](#)

[Nicolas Sarkozy's speech on 29 May](#)

[François Hollande's speech on 29 May](#)

[Jean-Marie Le Pen's declaration on 29 May](#)

## A first analysis of the Dutch referendum

On Wednesday June 1<sup>st</sup>, three days after the French 'Non', a vast majority of the Dutch voted against the European Constitutional Treaty. It was the first time in history that Dutch citizens were consulted about European integration in a national referendum. How could the Dutch, traditionally one of the most pro-European people of the Union, reject this Constitutional Treaty with such an overwhelming majority?

Compared to the French campaign, the Dutch campaign on the Constitutional Treaty started quite late.

Approximately six weeks before the referendum the government started its yes-campaign. Together with the government, most political parties advocated a yes-vote. Only a few small political parties opposed the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. The leftist Socialist Party, the ChristenUnie (an orthodox protestant party), and Group Wilders (a populist party set up by Geert Wilders) were prominent campaigners for a no-vote. However, some prominent opinion leaders also spoke out for a no-vote. They might have influenced another part of the electorate than the aforementioned politicians.

The government's yes-campaign was widely criticised. Responsibility for the referendum was divided between two Ministries (Domestic and Foreign Affairs). Most campaign flyers did not contain appealing shortlists of the Treaty's advantages, but existed of huge amounts of text instead. Members of the government emphasised the negative effects of rejection of the Treaty in often unfortunate pronouncements including terms like 'isolation', 'war' and even 'holocaust'. Many analysts believe that this approach has had a negative influence on voters.

On the other side, the no-campaign was very effective. Despite the fact that the no-camp was composed of the extremities of the political spectrum, it succeeded in clearly reflecting the citizens' feelings with respect to the European Constitutional Treaty, European integration and/or politics in general. The most convincing themes on the 'no-side' were the Euro, the loss of national sovereignty (a European superstate), diminishing Dutch influence in an enlarging Union, Turkey's impending entry, the position of the Netherlands as the biggest per capita contributor to the EU, the 'Bolkestein directive', negative sentiments about Brussels, negative sentiments about the current Dutch government and the (ineffective) disdain and pedantry of the yes-campaign.

The no-camp managed to attract a clear majority of Dutch voters. This is remarkable, as these political parties represent only a marginal fraction of the

electorate. Apparently, with respect to Europe there is a huge gap between the opinions of political parties, and the opinions of the Dutch voters. This gap is not necessarily something new. Over the last decades, Dutch citizens have not had much to choose with respect to Europe. The major (and some minor) political parties have always supported European integration. At the same time, Europe has never been important enough a theme to make any difference for voting behaviour in national elections. In other words, voters might have disagreed with their political parties on European matters, but the theme 'Europe' has never been sufficiently important to make people vote differently. However, in the referendum on June 1<sup>st</sup> negative feelings about The Hague and about Brussels combined into a defeat for the yes-camp.

In the last weeks before the referendum, support for the Constitutional Treaty gradually declined. In March, opinion polls showed a small majority for a 'yes'. In April, 'yes' and 'no' were both around 50 per cent, and from May onwards, support for the Constitutional Treaty continually declined. After the French 'Non' on May 29<sup>th</sup>, the difference between 'yes' and 'no' got even larger. Still, the large turnout (62,8 per cent) and the large difference between 'yes' (38,4 per cent) and 'no' (61,6 per cent) came as a surprise.

After the referendum, support for European integration in the Netherlands seems to be lower than ever. However, after decades of silence, Europe is now finally the subject of a vivid national debate. This could lead to a growing involvement of Dutch citizens with European integration. An involved and informed population may be just as

important to Europe's future as a supportive one. In that respect, the Dutch referendum might be a blessing in disguise.

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## 6. And finally...



### The UK Presidency of the European Union

Priorities and Objectives

20-21 June 2005  
Chatham House, London

The UK will take over the Presidency of the EU on 1<sup>st</sup> July. On the eve of this the Federal Trust is organising a two-day conference to discuss the UK government's priorities for their six month term. It will provide a platform to analyse and debate both the proposals emerging from the government, as well as questions relating to the future of Europe and Europe's role in the world.

The Conference will cover the changing institutional dimension of the European Union, the ratification process for the EU Constitutional Treaty, EU Enlargement, the future of the EU Budget, the Lisbon Agenda, European trade policy, Europe's external relations and role in global environmental governance.

For more information or to register online please go to [www.fedtrust.co.uk/presidency](http://www.fedtrust.co.uk/presidency)

## 7. News from the Federal Trust

### Recent Publications

*European Essay 35, May 2005:*

Michael Lake, ***'Turkey in the European Union: A personal view'***

Michael Lake is a former EU Ambassador to Turkey (1991-98) and Hungary (1998-2001), and a former journalist with *The Scotsman*, *The Guardian* and the BBC World Service.

This Essay can be downloaded at [www.fedtrust.co.uk/uploads/Essays/Essay\\_35.pdf](http://www.fedtrust.co.uk/uploads/Essays/Essay_35.pdf).

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