

The New Federalist

Magazine of the Young European Federalists

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A word from the Chief Editor

Five out of twenty five Member States have already ratified the European Constitution since October 2004. After Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Spain and Italy it will be the turn of Cyprus, Greece, France and the Netherlands to ratify it in the next couple of weeks. This edition will give you a good overview of the issues and debates of the upcoming referenda or parliament votes on the European Constitution. These articles show the diversity of the campaigns and the lack of the European dimension in it. Some countries are more and more reluctant to rubberstamp the EU Constitution. The final document was signed in Rome on 29 October last year, after of two years of negotiation, first in the Convention and then in the IGC.

YES in France and in the Netherlands!

The ratification process is encountering some difficulties, especially in one of its founding Members: France. Indeed, France is to vote on the Constitution on 29 May, but a YES vote remains far from certain. The debate has become embroiled in several other diverse issues - including Turkish membership of the EU; the unpopular services directive; the request of a more social Europe and lastly the general unpopularity of the government. Political parties are using these issues as a vehicle to prepare their candidacy for the next presidential elections in 2007. Thus, it seems that a very national based discourse is leading the referendum campaign in France. This is also the case in other countries which are holding a referendum on the Constitution. For instance, according to recent polls in the Netherlands, where the referendum will be held on 1 June, and also in Denmark, where the referendum will take place on 27 September 2005, there are less and less citizens who intend to vote in favour of the Constitution.

A rejection of the Constitution by any Member State, but especially by a founding member of the European Union would most likely plunge the Union into political

crisis and probably freeze the Constitutionalisation process for some time. But let's not come to that point!

YES to a true pan European campaign

It is our duty, as JEFers to combat these national arguments and to bring to the forefront the benefits of this Constitution for all the European citizens. As federalists we have fought for many years to have a Constitution for Europe, which now we have even if it not a federal one. It is a Constitution which will dramatically improve democracy and the rights of the citizens and the efficiency of the Union; therefore it is a Constitution we should fight for. Though the campaign will be tough, it is the moment for federalists to join forces to say YES and to fight for a YES in a true pan-European campaign in the 20 remaining countries.

YES to the Future with a ratified Constitution!

Beyond the ratification campaign, we have to think of the next step: What do we do if the Constitution is ratified? What do we do if some countries reject the text? Using article 47 and in particular the citizen's initiative will definitely be our major task in the coming months. In the long term, we should also focus on building a strong European civil society in order to make the best use of this tool. However for now, we should not to lose sight of the goal which is the European Constitution and that the upcoming referendums will be decisive for the future of Europe and for JEF.

Arielle Rouby

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Calendar of Events

May

- *9 Europe Day, Actions taking place around Europe
- *13-16 International campaigning weekend in France for YES in the referendum, Starsbourg, Paris
- *22 Transnational action day to support French YES in the referendum, Europe
- *20-22 Friends of JEF gathering, Brussels, Belgium
- *29 Referendum on the Constitution, France

June

- *1 Referendum on the Constitution, The Netherlands

July

- *3-16 Brave New Europe International Summer University, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- *4-9 Balkan - EU Youth Cooperation - Training Seminar - Chalkida and Athens, Greece
- *10 Referendum on the Constitution, Luxembourg

August-September

- *28 August - 2 September, Ventone International Seminar, Ventotene, Italy

September

- *27 Referendum on the Constitution, Denmark

October

- *23-28 International seminar "Asylum and Immigration in Europe" Starsbourg, France
- *28-30 Congress of JEF-Europe, Starsbourg, France

First Ratification, Then Information?

Slovenia was the third country to ratify the European Constitution on 1 February 2005. It happened quietly, without any big debate at home or any apparent fuss abroad, as from the beginning we were labeled as an "unproblematic" ratification. We got a tap on our shoulder from Brussels, and that was that. Come to think of it, ratification happened so quietly that the majority of the Slovene citizens didn't realise what was going on until it was already over.

Slovenia was the third country to ratify the European Constitution on 1 February 2005. It happened quietly, without any big debate at home or any apparent fuss abroad, as from the beginning we were labeled as an "unproblematic" ratification. We got a tap on our shoulder from Brussels, and that was that. Come to think of it, ratification happened so quietly that the majority of the Slovene citizens didn't realise what was going on until it was already over.

There was never a doubt about what Slovenia would do. Firstly, our own Constitution does not allow referenda on international treaties. The international treaties (which the Constitution *de jure* is) must always be ratified by the Parliament. Yet you can question it, as we are used to having referenda for all kind of obscurities. Furthermore, the option of a consultative referendum could have easily been applied if the will had have existed. Is a Constitution not politically important enough to hold a referendum on it? We have had referenda on artificial insemination of single women. The argument of historical importance can not be applied to Slovenia, where referenda take place only on issues where the public opinion is highly split or where the elected representatives cannot reach any decisions. Secondly, the support among the main political actors on the Constitution is strong. In fact, we barely have any Euroscepticism in Slovenia as well as (unfortunately) we depend very little on public opinion when it comes to issues of "international" nature. The justification that the political elite offered for such a quick ratification was to set a good and positive example for

Come to think of it, ratification happened so quietly that the majority of the Slovene citizens didn't realise what was going on until it was already over.

other countries to follow, nevermind the knowledge that an average Slovene citizen has or has not on the whole process.

There was a bizarre twist in the whole ratification process. The leading political forces in the country somehow decided that the ratification did not require prior information campaign, therefore it was decided to offer it after the Constitution has been ratified. The government promised to provide enough information on the Constitution to silence those few journalists who were pressing for it before the ratification, yet it has been two months now and so far nothing has happened. No booklets, no public debates, no information available except in the Commission Representation Office, nothing... Both governments, the previous and the current one, could have easily provided a fair amount of information for the citizens on the process of constructing, signing and ratifying the Constitution, however it still seems a task

nobody wants to push forward. Or maybe there is a misguided feeling that the Commission should be responsible for that. So far, only a few NGO's have been interested in raising the awareness of the Constitution, and they have been hardly supported by the co-state's funding.

Referendum or not, the Constitution is one of the most significant treaties in the European history and therefore needs to be introduced to the citizens. It is of vital importance to sum up the main ideas and present them to the citizens, and to show the clear need and desire for further political integration. And why it is so important to do it in countries that are not holding referenda? While we all tremble under the importance of YES campaign, and put our focus on those big, "important" countries like France, the UK and Poland etc., we tend to forget that the long-term results can be far worse in those "unimportant" countries that are not having a vote and form the majority of EU Member States. In terms of awareness and of a pro-European identity, lack of proper information will mean that the European Project, and in particular the democratic deficit, will be far worse off in the long term. Ignorance can be as bad as political manipulation, but in my opinion far worse than the willful decision made upon weighted facts. Our organizations should therefore do their best not just in terms of YES campaigning, but also increasing awareness and distributing information to as wide circle of recipients as we can, yet still raising certain issues and debates on how things could be improved in the long-term. It is an ongoing fight that we must win.



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The Spanish referendum: the path to follow or a lost opportunity?

Spain was the first member state of the EU to ratify the Constitutional Treaty through a popular vote. The (consultative) referendum had a positive result, as overwhelming as predictable, which was praised by the European institutions and leaders as a success and an example to be followed. Nevertheless, there are, beyond this optimistic evaluation, some important lessons to be drawn from the experience.

Owing to the burden of the dictatorship, Europe was always regarded as a framework for emancipation and democracy. Thus the accession in 1986 was widely seen as a proof of the "normalisation" of the country. In addition Spain benefited significantly from the cohesion funds, which were actually a Spanish proposal. This positive perception of European integration has always coexisted with a widespread and deep lack of knowledge about the process itself. Therefore, as European federalists, we welcomed enthusiastically the first referendum ever in Spain about a European issue, since we thought it would be a unique opportunity to inform and debate with people about Europe, as well as the first clear opportunity to overcome a certain democratic deficit the whole process. However, we feel that, for many reasons, the referendum process was a lost opportunity.

As European federalists, we welcomed enthusiastically the first referendum ever in Spain about a European issue; however we feel that, for many reasons, the referendum process was a lost opportunity.

Mr. Zapatero called the referendum mainly in order to consolidate his leadership, whereas the bigger opposition party, still suffering from losing office one year ago, kept a lukewarm attitude hoping for a very low turnout - and did so not very discreetly. Meanwhile, the nationalist/regionalist parties held quite ambiguous yet pro-yes positions in the case of the rightwing ones, and undoubtedly pro-no approaches in the case of the leftwing ones; the greens and the "new left" opposed the Constitution with a "social no". While the alignment of the political parties in different positions according to their goals and ideology is as natural as necessary, the expected nationalisation of the campaign reached unexpected peaks of irresponsibility. What we sincerely did not expect was to hear the vice-president of the government claiming that 80% of the Spanish people voted for the constitution (the exact figure was 76,73% **but the turnout was 42,6%**); the number two of the opposition party congratulating "those who went to vote **and also those**

who did not" (something never heard before in 25 years); those favouring a "no" vote claiming that they "increased their votes" since the percent of the "no" vote had been higher than theirs in the national election (!)... We strongly believe that reducing every single issue to a merely partisan quarrel is indeed one of the major reasons behind low turnouts in electoral processes. In this sense, the lack of experience in national referendums may have added to the general trend towards the simplification of debates.

Moreover, the timing of the referendum shows that the priority was being the first rather than having a real debate. There was not enough time to inform and discuss about the text. As a result, the institutional and yes campaigns were extremely superficial, almost vacuous. They consisted of propaganda based on big and nice words, but very little information. The "no" campaign claimed the Constitution leads to the end of the "European social model", but lacking concrete and viable proposals on how to reach a better point from the present situation (thinking

Europe wide). Also, particularly in Catalunya, Euskadi and Galicia, some political parties and many social organisations favoured a "no" vote due to the poor role of regions and the lack of recognition for the

other three languages spoken in Spain - forgetting Madrid and not Brussels is responsible for that. There was at least one very positive feature of the "no" side: it was not a significant "anti-Europe no". The "no" speeches reprimanded Europe for not being "social" enough or "regionalist" enough, but never for being something whose ideal end is a federal structure.

The most worrying part of the result was the low turnout. Political participation is a right that has costs in terms of time, information and involvement, and no political system can be completely inclusive. But every politician who calls him or herself a democrat should favour civic attitudes above any kind of personal or partisan interest. Giving direct voice to the citizens for certain issues is essential. And even if the results were such, the referendum had a positive consequence: at least Europe was discussed and talked about more than ever in Spain.

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Italy: the Unsmooth Ratification of Mr Berlusconi

Italy has finally ratified the European Constitution. The related bill was passed on 25 January by the lower chamber of the Italian Parliament (Camera) with 436 yes and 28 nos (with 5 abstentions) and on 6 April by the upper chamber (Senato) with 217 yes and 16 nos. The nos came from Lega Nord (the extreme-right party, which is member of the governing coalition) and Rifondazione Comunista (extreme-left), and the abstentions from the Greens.

Despite this overwhelming majority in favour, the ratification was not as smooth as we could expect. Since the Constitution was signed in Rome on 29 October, no real debate has taken place between political parties and, as regional elections were coming closer, no party wanted to express a clear position on the matter, fearing that it could be used against them in the electoral campaign. Thus, despite the fact that Mr Berlusconi had solemnly declared that Italy would be the first country to ratify the Constitution, it was preceded by Latvia, Hungary, Slovenia and Spain, and we had to wait after the regional elections for the final approval. These are the consequences of national ratifications. Only an Europe-wide referendum could have raised a genuinely European debate on the Constitution.

On the side of the citizens, there still seems to be a massive support for the Constitution and the whole process of European integration. According to the recent Eurobarometer survey, 72% of the Italians interviewed declare themselves in favour of the Constitution, while only 10% state their opposition. This is the highest level of support in the whole EU, where the average support reaches a modest 49%.

This should not be surprising for us. On 18 June 1989, on the same day as the European elections, Italian citizens voted in a consultative referendum, unique in the whole history of Europe, on "transforming the European Community into an effective Union, with a Government accountable to the European Parliament, giving the European Parliament a mandate to draft a project of

European Constitution". The referendum, promoted by the Italian federalists, inspired by the moral heritage of Altiero Spinelli, who died three years before, was supported by 88% of the voters.

Despite this, and despite Italy being a founding member of the EU, who has on many occasions in the past (e.g. the direct election of the EP or the Euro) played a fundamental role in pushing the deal inside the European Council, the European attitude of the Berlusconi government has put our country, for the first time after WWII, virtually out of the group of the most pro-European states. We can quote for instance the support that Italy gave to the US during the Iraqi crisis, signing the infamous "Letter of the Eight", or the turmoil generated by the declarations made

by the designated Commissioner Rocco Buttiglione that led to an unprecedented crisis between the Parliament and the Commission.

Nevertheless, the Italian ratification is still important. Now we hope that it can push the other Member States towards the same goal.

JEF has already stressed at the Oostende FC, that no state should have the right to stop the others from integrating further, and that, should a few states fail to ratify the Constitution, it should enter into force in the others. Nevertheless, everybody can clearly see the peculiarity of the French situation, where a No in the referendum could mean the virtual death of the Constitution, and the worst crisis ever known in the whole integration process.

Even though we support the Constitution, we must admit that it is far from being perfect, and that its critics have some strong arguments. This is why we need to use these two years not only to campaign for the Yes, which is fundamental, but also to pave the way for the new campaign that should follow the ratification. We are indeed a small movement, but we are the only ones who clearly state that this Constitution is not enough. We still need to transform the Union into a real Federation, with its own democratic Government, as suggested by Altiero Spinelli, more than 60 years ago.

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Greece: Missing Out the Constitution Debate?

On several occasions it has been pointed out that the "European democratic deficit" is more apparent in the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe. The first European Constitution was an excellent opportunity to diminish this democratic deficit. The information campaigns launched on the content of the European Constitution were significant initiatives, as they gave citizens the opportunity to start getting familiar with the EU, slowly becoming an active part of it. The Constitution also marked an excellent time for the respective leaderships to diminish drastically the democratic deficit, by adopting the referenda option for the ratification of the Constitution. Still a great majority of the governments gave preference to other processes.

Greece was no exception, and as a result lost the opportunity to render itself an example of democracy, since the Greek government chose to ratify the European Constitution through the National Parliament. The Greek Constitution gives a great range of liberty to the party in power, whether to follow the path of a referendum or not on important political matters. This means that the decision of the Greek government had a political connotation and not juridical. On the other hand, it is true that Greek politics has not experienced a referendum since 1974, and as a result it is not a common practice for the Greeks to organize and conduct referendums. Regarding this choice and in answering requests for a referendum, Mr P. Moliviatis, Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that the legally elected representatives of the Greek people carry the legitimacy to decide on serious national issues.

"Panhellenic Socialist Movement" (PA.SO.K), which is the biggest party of the parliamentary opposition declared that the the European Constitution is one of the most heated issues that Greek politics has ever dealt with and this is a quite good reason for having a national referendum. The president of that party, Mr Papandreou, stressed that the parliamentary ratification would never be enough for such a big institutional change, something that will affect the lives of 260.000.000 people.

The fact remains that ND and PASOK, the biggest Greek parties, are indeed in favour of the Constitution and have both expressed their support for federalism as "the only way for a strong and liberal Europe".

The KKE (Greek Communist Party) and SYNASPISMOS (Coalition of Left of Movements and

Ecology) however both expressed grave concerns regarding the Constitution.

The KKE stated that the European Union appears plunged into crisis because the Constitution proposes to transform the neoliberal project into law. Furthermore, "the so called European Constitution is the high legal entity of European plutocracy and aims to attack people and the rights of the working class" and continued "No to any European Constitution, no to the the EU".

"Synaspismos", even though supporting in general the European concept, opposes the European Constitution on the basis that it promotes the liberalised single market, suppresses human rights and does not take into consideration the social model. They also blame the Greek government for moving towards the ratification "with express procedures that disregard the citizens' participation and have a deep undemocratic character". They have called for a referendum.

Greece missed a wonderful chance of opening the debate on the European Constitution and the EU in general, with no real risk over the result as it is more than certain that Greece would have had a positive response in a possible referendum.

Greek citizens on the other hand seriously lack information regarding these developments, as the Greek mass media hardly ever mentions the topic. A governmental initiative started very late, 1st of April, when an information campaign was launched; a "Euro-Bus",

which is very similar to the JEF project, will tour the country with material on the EU and the European Constitution. The event had next to no publicity and there was sadly no special event marking the bus's departure from Athens.

In closing, the fact remains that Greece missed a wonderful chance to open the debate on the European Constitution and the EU in general, with no real risk over the result, as it is certain that Greece would have had a positive response in a possible referendum. The remaining question is whether Europe is able to move forward by ignoring -up to a point- the social reality and the citizens, who are the ones responsible for giving the proper legitimacy to the political will and to the decisions in the Union.

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The ratification of the European Constitution in Germany

The ratification process itself will be a Parliamentary one. After the agreement on the Constitution by the Intergovernmental Conference, a debate took place as to whether a referendum on the Constitution should be held or not. Since the German Fundamental Law does not foresee referenda on the National level an amendment of the Constitution would have been necessary. In the end, the referendum initiative failed. JEF Germany always favoured a pan-European referendum but rejected a national one. A national referendum could easily be mixed up with other issues related to internal affairs and turn out to be an answer to a completely different question than that related to the European Constitution.

The Parliamentary ratification has already started in February and will be completed by June 2005. Both chambers, Bundestag and Bundesrat, have to adopt the Constitution by a two-thirds majority. The Bundestag will have its vote on the 12th May. JEF and Europa-Union were promoting this schedule with the view of the French referendum since a positive vote of the German parliament should give a strong signal to France. Since all political groups in the Bundestag have demonstrated their support to the Constitution, the outlook for the German ratification is very positive.

The Bundesrat, representing the interests of the German Länder, is supposed to vote in early June. The German Länder have as well adopted a positive attitude towards the Constitution and during the ratification process the Länder will try to fix favourable conditions for the exercise of the rights stemming from the protocol on the application of subsidiarity. The issue of the influence and the rights of the Länder in European affairs

is highly contentious and has been one of the difficult questions of the conference on Federal reform, which might continue its work after a first failure.

Due to the non-contentious nature of the German ratification process, the press takes barely notice of it. Thus, the knowledge of the German citizens about the Constitution is relatively low (as in most Member States). According to the Eurobarometer¹, one third of the interviewed people declared to have never heard about the Constitution. Only 11 % declare to know overall its contents, other 33% have heard about the Constitution, but know little about its contents.

Therefore, there is a big information deficit, which demands increased efforts from all supporters. The Federal Government is organising an "Info Truck" about the Constitution, which will make its tour through 50 German cities.

Together with the European Movement and Europa-Union, JEF Germany will make its own contribution in

order to inform the German citizens and the first edition of our detailed commentary of the Constitution based on the Convention's draft has been a success. In an easy accessible language, all articles of part I (and where necessary of the other parts) are explained and

commented in a federalist light. The second edition, which will be based on the final version, will be published soon.

In order to reach a broad public, a flyer has been published, which sums up the most important points and is intended to create an initial interest in the Constitution. With the Berlin-Seminar, the German part of the international YES-campaign was launched and many events, including debates, street actions, school tours and YES-bus Campaigns etc, all over Germany will follow.

¹ special edition "Constitution", March 2005

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German Bundestag



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Bolkenstein, Barroso and the knock-on effect on the ratification process

It is perfectly evident to anyone who has observed the evolution of the European constitutional debate in France that it is by no means guaranteed that the OUI side will triumph. If France says no, then there will be no European Constitution, at least not this one and certainly not now.

A historical responsibility weighs on the French citizens but this will probably not influence the voters.

Hardly anyone is reminding the public of the terrible mistake made by the French parliament in 1954 when it voted against the European Defence Community. There is no one to tell the French that if they had been more forward-thinking,

the dream of a common foreign policy and effective economic government - something Europe is incapable of offering today - would probably be a reality. Moreover, no one is reminding them that they have already blocked the process once and that if Europe today is not what it should be, it is not solely the fault of the British who systematically refuse any type of integration.

On the contrary, the very existence of this veto is presented as a reason in itself to say no, as if the rest of Europe was not able to see the evil in the constitution and that the French had a special responsibility to block it. The Non campaigners hammer home the point that France is the only country capable of precisely understanding the ultra-liberal nature of the text and that the French are the only ones who can stop, then modify this process.

Whatever we might think of these debates, we must be conscious that this is not the ground on which we should campaign. That is, if we really believe the Constitutional treaty is a step towards a federal constitution. The French population wants to be reassured; the French want to believe they still are master of their own destiny that they count more than anyone else.. And of course, they do not want to see their own national of welfare state imperilled by European integration.

The coalition in favour of the Constitution is starting to realise this, in the midst of the debate on Bolkenstein . For those acquainted with European affairs it is obvious that there is no link between the Bolkenstein text and the Constitution. The fate of the Bolkenstein directive and its liberalisation of services will be determined

independently from the fate of the treaty. But all the same, we must accept that for most of the population these issues are intrinsically linked and Bolkenstein will certainly influence decisively the outcome of the referendum.

Current measures to liberalise the European market, are, in the French psyche, the exact opposite of what a State or a political organisation should do for its citizens:

protect them. It is seen not only as a step towards the dismantling of the welfare state. The French perceive Europe to be importing its own brand of aggressive capitalism at a time when they think they

should be exporting their human rights and social welfare to the rest of Europe, especially to the East.

Faced with this catastrophic situation, what should federalists do, in France and in Europe?

Well, first: educate, educate, educate. We should try to have the most direct contact possible with the population. Let the federalists go on to the streets and inform the citizens. We must not follow governmental nor party propaganda: they follow their own personal goals, we work for Europe. We must offer objective, pragmatic, reliable information on what the treaty is, what it does and what will change. We must not be ashamed of criticising what Europe is doing today when it acts against the European interest. Our objectivity and our knowledge are our best campaigning tools.

At the European level, we should ask Mr. Barroso to act as if he wants this Constitution, even if he does not really believe in it. We should ask him to stop playing into the hands of the Non's, giving them ammunition as he desperately tries to please his liberal electorate and to work sincerely for the European interest which should be his only aim. Today, the European interest is the Constitution, only the Constitution, with or without Bolkenstein. Europe is worth an ideological sacrifice...

Faced with this catastrophic situation, what should federalists do, in France and in Europe?

Well, first: educate, educate, educate. We should try to have the most direct contact possible with the population.



JEF France street stall for the European campaign

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The Constitutional Debates in the Netherlands

On Wednesday June the 1st, the Dutch will vote in a referendum on the EU Constitution. The notoriously pro-European Dutch are sceptical of this 350-pages long document, believing it will drain too much sovereignty from the Dutch Parliament to Europe. The little real debate that does take place is contaminated by other issues. In the end however, the most important question is not "Will the Dutch vote yes or no?" but "Does their vote actually matter?".

What debate?

Pollsters state that 'the man on the street' distrusts Brussels and the rules it brings in, and that 'he' is fed up with the draining away of sovereignty. The EU costs too much and delivers too little.

Reason enough to talk about Europe, but a look at the newspapers shows there is virtually no debate. It seems that the Dutch have grown numb regarding the politics involved and are more concerned with other issues.

The numbness comes from the common perception that even if the Average Joe tries, all decisions made are done behind his back through political wheeling and dealing when it comes to Brussels.

But even if the Dutch felt their voice would matter, they have more pressing matters on their minds. The subsequent murders of Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and Theo van Gogh last November have left the nation within an identity crisis. Especially since Van Gogh the most dominant issue is Islamic fundamentalism and the way foreigners integrate into Dutch culture. And if not that, we worry about the ageing-problem and the economy. So come referendum day, chances are the turnout will be low.

Yes or no?

But a lot can happen between now and June the 1st that can influence the outcome. The first is Geert Wilders, a Parliamentarian, who broke with his original party. He is against the Constitution and might start campaigning heavily within the next few months. His right-winged views are popular, and he claims to be against Europe as a whole, because of the centralization, because of Turkey, because of everything. So the public might believe that the Constitution has something to do with Turkey, and if that

happens, the turnout will be higher and will deliver a resounding NO.

There are also other issues that could arouse the dormant but vicious Euro-scepticism in the Netherlands. Such as the Labour law, as regards to outsourcing and the influx of letting in cheaper labour forces from the newly admitted countries or the creation of a European defence force.

So the chances are that the Dutch will vote no: it depends on whether the no-campaigners are able to make these a dominant enough issues for us to go out and to vote.

Does it matter?

The short answer is 'no...probably'. The verdict of the Dutch citizens on the Constitution might have no effect at all on the government's course of action.

This is because the Dutch government has a choice as to what kind of referendum it holds: having on the Constitution - it can be legally binding or not. In this case, the Cabinet called issued a non-binding referendum, and therefore the government can treat the outcome as a consultation and - it can decide to regard or disregard it.

The Cabinet has made it clear that they are in favour of the Constitution and will disregard a 'no'. In a speech delivered at the Ambassador's Conference last January, the Dutch prime-minister Balkenende opposed the no-campaigners. Junior-Minister for European Affairs Atzo Nicolaï argued even more strongly that the Cabinet would never accept a 'no'.

But wait. Although the Cabinet might back the Constitution, the Constitution also needs to pass through the Parliament. The majority of the parties in the Second Chamber have signalled they will follow the outcome of the vote. But in a Kafkaesque turn of events even this signal might not be enough: the two largest parties in the Parliament, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, have already said they will not follow the outcome of the referendum if the turnout falls below 30%. Without these two there can never be a majority against the Constitution in the Parliament.

So the most important question concerning the referendum in the Netherlands is not how what the people will vote but whether their vote will actually be made to count. There is a chance that we will vote 'no' but the 'no' will probably have no effect on the ratification.

...the most important question is not
"Will the Dutch vote yes or no?"
but "Does their vote actually matter?"



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Malta's [non]debate on the Ratification - does the end justify the means?

Malta's ratification of the European Constitution is scheduled to be held in July 2005, a smooth ratification occurring by simple majority in the Maltese National Parliament just before the summer recess. The ratification is expected to happen without any particular problems, especially in light of the comfortable majority enjoyed by the pro-European Nationalist Party in Government, and the decision taken not to involve the public in a national referendum.



Auberge de Castille

A lot has been said in JEF both in favour and against the use of national referenda to decide the issue of whether to ratify or not the European Constitution, and I personally stand for the idea that although the referendum is not exactly a perfect mechanism it is at least a good enough instigator of a public debate on the issue to be decided. In fact, in the case of Malta, there is a situation now of almost complete indifference or at best, misinformation, as well as one of the lowest rates of support for it, with only just over 30% declaring themselves in favour of it.

...in the case of Malta, there is a situation now of almost complete indifference, or at best, misinformation, as well as one of the lowest rates of support for it...

One reason for this lack of political debate is that the second of the two major political parties, the Malta Labour Party, which has always argued against joining the Union, has as yet to take an official position on the Constitution. The party is internally divided on this issue: one arguing that since Malta is now a member of the EU, there is no point in not voting for the Constitution and the other maintaining that the EU constitution would be the overriding law that would affect Malta's dealings and affairs with other EU members and as a result, the Maltese Constitution would merely end up as a paper document with entrenched clauses, such as Maltese neutrality, having to be foregone.

What perhaps deserves also attention is the reason why the decision was taken not to hold a referendum. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister and leader of the Nationalist party, has argued that there is no point for the referendum since the EU Constitution would only deal with relations between the EU and Malta while the Maltese constitution was the document that shows how the Maltese government will deal with its citizens and

non-EU countries. He thus implies that nothing will change drastically with the EU Constitution. Dr Gonzi also tried to reinforce his arguments by saying that once the electorate voted for EU membership, it follows that they are in favour of the EU constitution and had given him and his Government the mandate to pursue any commitments with the European Union.

This is the official position of the Government; however looking back a few years, exactly to March 2003, it is not difficult to understand why a referendum was not considered to be the most viable option. At the time, the result of the referendum, in which the YES [to the Accession to the EU] was

won by less than 20,000 votes, was not accepted by the leader of the Malta Labour Party, who came to the rather strange conclusion that the "low" turnout of 91% indicated that the people who did not vote actually were voting for the NO. This meant that the party in the opposition included in the NO vote also the uninterested, those working abroad, the sick ... and the dead.

However, if this decision might be thus considered understandable, what is not justified is the fact that no real information campaign exists at the moment. The Malta-EU Information Centre, which before the Accession was the major supplier of EU related information, offers an online version of the Constitution, but not much else, and the last National Conference on the Constitution was held in November 2003. This will bring about the situation that the Constitution will be ratified, and it will be have the approval of slightly more than half the population (the Nationalist Party followers) but it will be a document that very few people know anything about, and I personally am not very convinced that this is the right way to go about it. The end does not justify the means, and as a convinced Europhile, I believe strongly in the European process and would rather risk the disapproval of the public, than securing the ratification of the Constitution based on the absolute ignorance of it.

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What on earth is going on in the UK?

Probably the most difficult referendum on the Constitution in Europe and barely a Yes campaign leaflet in sight. What is happening in the UK? Are the pro-Europeans so demoralised after years of attacks from the largely Eurosceptic media, or are they just expecting a repeat of the referendum on the Euro - a battle with the Eurosceptics that never came (this is a possibility if France says no in their referendum). What are the reasons for this, and is this a peculiarly British situation?

The campaign for (and against) the Constitution began in the run-up to the European elections in June 2004. Or rather, it didn't. The European elections were combined with local elections in many parts of the UK, and were seen by many as a mid-term test of the Labour Government. As such, the focus was largely on national politics; the economy for Labour and opposition to the war in Iraq by the Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives called for a referendum on the Constitution, accusing Tony Blair of not trusting the people to decide. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was the only party to have a clear message on Europe, with a campaign to leave the EU.

The Government initially defined the Constitution as "a tidying up exercise", a treaty of little significance for which the normal process of parliamentary ratification was sufficient. When the Government announced they would hold a referendum on the Constitution, it wasn't only the pro-Europeans who were taken by surprise. The Conservative party had already printed thousands of leaflets demanding a referendum, which then had to be shredded. With no real message, in many parts of the country were beaten into fourth place by the extreme right wing UKIP.

So whilst the Government's decision prevented the massive gains for the largest opposition party that had



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been predicted, it created a situation no pro-European would relish. As the campaign focused largely on the war in Iraq, an opportunity to inform the public about Europe was missed, leaving the pro-Europeans with a mountain to climb. The impossibility of any cross-party cooperation on a campaign in the run-up to the national parliamentary elections and the Government's focus on pushing election winning legislation through parliament and you begin to see why the debate has not been led from the top. The question is, will the parties be able to work together on a pro-European campaign after the election, and will they have allowed themselves enough time to convince the general public?

Although Eurobarometer polls put the UK at the bottom of the rankings in support for the Constitution, we are not alone in having less than 50% support amongst the general public.

The difficulties of the current political situation are illustrated by the refusal of EU funds to raise awareness of the Constitution. The anti-Europeans claimed that this amounts to a tax-payer

financed propaganda campaign and so the Government declared it would not accept any funds which could be seen as "pro-constitution propaganda". Whilst the Government continues to concede these small battles in order to diffuse the opponents of the Constitution, it does



UK Parliament- Somebody left the lights on in the rush to get reelected

not seem to realise that it is slowly undermining the Yes campaign - especially when the no campaign has millions of pounds of finance.

Although Eurobarometer polls put the UK at the bottom of the rankings in support for the Constitution, we are not alone in having less than 50% support amongst the general public. The reasons for this lack of support are the same as in

many other European countries; a fear of losing national sovereignty, years of politicians and the media blaming unpopular legislation on the EU, a lack of understanding of the EU and a general aversion to change. These are issues which on some levels are easy to address - once people learn the truth, it follows that they will support the Constitution and the European project in general. However, Britons are very distrustful of anything politicians have to say - even "Teflon Tony" Blair has found that the people no longer trust him, losing his main strength as a politician. We now need a broader coalition for the yes campaign - business, NGOs and most importantly, youth organisations. This campaign will be over before the political parties alone can convince the public of the positives the EU has to offer.

The ratification process and the "Swiss special case"

Though Switzerland is far away from being part of the political Union, its pro-Europeans must pay special attention to the establishment of the European Constitution. As a side effect, its successful ratification would be a precious contribution to show Swiss EU-sceptics the democratic progress of the Union and - negatively seen - to make them aware of the price the country will be paying for its offside-position in the future.

Giving Europe a more democratic face means improving the Swiss citizen's perception of the EU. Apart from the neutrality question, the lack of democracy on the Union level has traditionally been the dominant issue of Swiss EU-opponents. A smooth endorsement of the Constitution in all the Member States would help us to undermine one of our isolationists' main strategies, which consists of preaching the supposed incompatibility between the Swiss and the European understanding of democracy. In practice, this usually sounds like: "(...) The European Union's democratic deficit stands in a fundamental contradiction with our understanding of direct democracy"¹. If every country ratifies the Constitution, the "democratic deficit" argument would gradually lose its plausibility.



I never asked to open an account!

The negative argument deals with the construction of a European civil society, more accurately with the Constitution's catalysing impact on the development of a true pan-European public opinion. A ratified Constitution generates the potential for a deeper political integration, which will make the EU appear stronger to Switzerland. Given that we try to compensate for the biggest disadvantages of our off-side position "in a bilateral way", a more coherent EU would also have more bargaining power: up to now, our main negotiating partner has been the Brussels administration - bureaucrats and experts having only a weak democratic legitimacy; in the future, the rulers on such negotiations will be Europe's citizens - the amount of people to be persuaded raises accordingly. If the EU would have been able to back up its position by a constitutional framework during the latest negotiations, the content of our bilateral agreements with Brussels

arguably would not have turned out to be that advantageous for Switzerland. The explicit protection of the Swiss banking secrecy is maybe not the worst example to show how generous Brussels has been in the past.

Bilateral agreements are mostly static and need to be re-negotiated whenever the starting situation changes. In that perspective it is obvious that "the bilateral way" has no future in a more and more dynamic and unified Union. It is impossible to predict the moment when Swiss citizens will start feeling embarrassed by their increasing isolation. Today at least, the consequences of our offside-position are not yet painful.

However, the current political reality both in Switzerland and in the EU condemns this optimistic scenario to be a long-term issue. In the short-term (at least 10-15 years), a successful ratification paradoxically bears the potential to provoke counterproductive effects and - in some respects - to enhance further the Swiss isolationist's distrustful attitude towards the political Union. The biggest difficulties are following:

- The Constitution allocates a number of vital competencies to EU institutions, the accession of Switzerland to the EU would undeniably entail a weakening of the 26 Canton's competencies for practical reasons, and that's exactly what engenders a particular reluctance in Swiss society: intuitively, we are still considering strong Cantons as a *conditio sine qua non* of national cohesion. In this respect, there's one certainty today: the European Constitution has yet to become a more federalist one.
- Since the European Constitution proves increasing ambitions in foreign- and defence matters, it is to be feared that advocates of the Swiss conception of neutrality will be given new pretexts to preach against the "foreign judges and lords in Brussels". Switzerland undoubtedly will have to change its mind in the neutrality question.
- Low turnouts in the European elections and referendums

Although this seems an enormous challenge today, we mustn't forget that a smooth ratification of the European Constitution is an absolutely crucial long-term prerequisite to find the necessary double-majorities (both People and Cantons) in favour of a true integration of Switzerland into the EU. A failure would be fatal for our plan to become a part of Europe.

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¹Swiss People's Party: "For an Independent Foreign Policy", position paper, September 2003.

We have a European Constitution

We have a European Constitution. Although not every country has ratified it so far and despite the fact that the current text looks rather like a treaty than a Constitution, politically we've got it. Once we can make use of the word, it will be politically difficult to step back to old intergovernmental treaties. At the same time, the new document is a tool, to be fulfilled over the next years with federalist content, as it happened in the recent past with the Euro and - to some extent - with the European Parliament.

Still we need a Federal Government for the Union. Government is the key word. No matter how many are against it in Europe nowadays: as polls show, the majority of European citizens are in favour and the issues that such a government must address are too urgent to delay it further.

On one hand, peace is the core value and goal of federalism and is still far away from being reached across the world. Too many wars are being fought in Africa, too many ongoing conflicts - such as the ones in the Middle East - still persist, and too many states are involved in civil strifes, criminal activities and lack of fundamental rights. A real European Government, accountable to the Parliament, can represent the only possible answer to such problems. While waiting for the chance to fight for a World Federation, a united Europe would be the crucial intermediate step, if it tried to develop a foreign policy founded on the concept of a "gentle power" (Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa). The "gentle" Europe should choose the way of the so-called "soft power" (Joseph Nye), that is: *diplomacy, trade, culture*. But still a "power", endowed with a proper European army and the strength of a high-tech economy. Naturally, a Single European Foreign Policy, embodied in a real Foreign Affairs Minister, wouldn't solve the whole of world's problems but it would be a crucial step forward.

On the other hand, Europe needs a Government to solve out its urgent economic



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shortcomings. What about the Lisbon strategy? Despite the recurrent rhetoric on the need to implement concrete plans for Research and Development, no decisive steps have been undertaken so far. Economies require continental-scale research policies to develop further and to overcome the impressive growth of unemployment which occurred in the last decade, while the Euro will have a real power on world financial market only if supported by a proper budget policy, implemented by an accountable European Economic Affairs Ministry.

To reach a European Federal Government is difficult, but not impossible for young federalists, who remember very well how in the Seventies the single currency was something unbelievable for everyone except some Italian Federalists.

To reach a European Federal Government is difficult, but not impossible for young federalists!

First we need to involve the grassroots of civil society. At the beginning of December in Genoa there will be a great gathering of people, a Convention of the European citizens, aimed at strengthening the relationship between federalists, ecologists and pacifists, on the way towards a European Federal Government. Most of these movements have goals such as peace, international justice and sustainable development; we federalists have the tool, that is, institutions; working together, we can get both. Of course, another crucial ally is trade unions, which have understood that in the global era labour's rights need to be defended at a supranational level. However, civil society is not enough. We need an ally that can play a link between it and institutions: the parties. The cutting edge of European parties is the Federalist intergroup: its members have dared to call themselves "federalists", now



The current European Parliament- a future home for federalism?

they have to be consequent. To sum up, we need the support of four partners: the core of the European civil society, with its cross-national movements; trade unions with their emerging European structure; the Federalist intergroup in the European Parliament; and the governments which might be in favour of building a true European one.

A final consideration has to deal with us as federalists. Our allies' support will be meaningless if we give up: as we pretend to be "one generation ahead" and as we have the power of ideas, it's up to us to lead the group and to act as the vanguard and the brain of the process; our allies can provide us with the frame, we can only play as an engine.

JEF between the European and the Federal Constitution: The challenge of building a European Civil Society

With a European Constitution drafted and the struggle for its ratification fought all over Europe, the federalist task is far from completed. Both the danger of the non-ratification and the non-federal characters of the Constitution show us quite clearly that JEF will have to continue its struggle for a European federation. At the same time the existence of a European Constitution with many federal aspects has created space in the federalist agenda to look further than just to the Constitution and to focus on something that a Federal Europe must build upon - a European Civil Society.

For me, federalism is two things. First of all it is a political structure that we JEFers aim at implementing on Europe, not the least through a federal constitution. But *federalism as a system* was not given to the federalists by a prophet, it was rather the result of trying to implement the values of what I would call *federalism as an ideology*. Therefore the values of federalism stand behind any quest of a European Federation and must be advocated by all people calling themselves federalists.

I believe JEF must, at the side of the important task of fighting for both the ratification and the reformation of the Constitution, seriously engage in mobilising Civil Society around the values of federalism, clearly illustrating their supranational dimension. To do this we need to deepen the qualitative debate on the federal values as constitutionalism, democracy, human rights, pluralism/tolerance, common identity and solidarity/equality, exploring both their European and non-European dimension.

What is a European citizenship and how should it be developed? What should a European identity be built upon? How should a European tax system and redistribution system be constructed? How should immigration be dealt with in Europe and in the world at large? How could a constitutionalising process take place outside Europe? How can we reach a point of more economical and political equality in the world? What are the problems of democracy and how do we tackle them? How should world federalism express itself and, more importantly, how do we get there?

These, among others, are questions we as federalists have to give a federalist answer to. By doing this, we will

not only explore and develop the "federal theory" as such, but also actively promote the building of a European Civil Society to centre around these federal values. Therefore we must seize the moment as the constitutional debate quiets down and set the federal values at the centre of the European agenda. And whereas article-11 and that, QMV ratios and financial perspectives unfortunately have quite a low sex appeal to a wider audience, federalism as ideology is rather attractive and has the power to involve large parts of society. Therefore, we will create new arenas for our federal message and we will be able to reach a new audience, new potential members and new partner organisations that we can influence.

In this agenda the federal ideology is put in focus and the simple pro-European message is transformed to the building of a European identity. Rather than selling a political opinion we must actively work to change attitudes, in order to foster federal and pro-European opinions. And in doing this we have to use another rhetoric than only that of political argumentation. To actively

promote trans-national dialogues, the establishment of supranational movements and parties, European symbolism and culture exchange would be necessary in order to build a European identity.

Involving the Civil Society movements in a Europe-wide dialogue highlighting the European dimension to the issues concerned is an important task to "federalise" society. In doing this we will also be able to prove that the No-side is wrong by demonstrating to the growing anti-globalisation movement that the dangers of the economical globalisation can only be met by an increased political globalisation of a federal character.

While giving everything we can for getting the constitution ratified we must start preparing for our next task. This task must lie in the creation of a European Civil Society built around the core values of federalism, a task we must complete to ever make our dream of a European Federation come true. We have a challenging and exciting journey ahead of us and our haunt of the holy federation has only just begun!

I believe JEF must, at the side of the important task of fighting for both the ratification and the reformation of the Constitution, seriously engage in mobilising Civil Society around the values of federalism, clearly illustrating their supranational dimension.

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Europe, where is the feel-good?

The EU has come a long way in a few short years. From the grim realities of late-night horse trading at Nice less than 5 years ago, we have witnessed a remarkable string of achievements - the successful launch of the Euro and the enlargement to 10 new Member States to name the most major. We have even reached the stage where we are on the verge of seeing the first European Constitution come into being.

I write this article a few days after the conclusion of the latest European Council meeting, an effort to get the flagging Lisbon process back on track. Problem is that no-one now seems to know the destination, and one feels that all of the EU's Member States are on different lines to get the knowledge based economy in the sky. Commission President Barroso has pinned his hopes on some rejuvenation of Lisbon, hoping to see real economic progress in the EU by the end of his term in office.

Tied closely to the Lisbon Strategy are a number of other issues, most notably the highly contested Services Directive. With the noble goal of opening up the service sector to cross border competition, this piece of legislation has prompted considerable navel-gazing on the part of leaders of the EU's Member States. Social dumping, a race to the bottom, a danger to the European social model! How can we accept that complain Schröder and Chirac in unison.

On the other hand, the new Member States cannot quite get to grips with the EU that they have just joined. With the genuine hope of strong catch-up growth, following the experience of Ireland, Spain and Portugal in the past, they find themselves in a Union that wants to cut overall spending to 1% of EU GDP and maintain agricultural subsidies, meaning structural funds vital for development of the new Member States are sure to be squeezed. Even the Euro seems to have lost its shine with the watering-down of the stability and growth pact.

These developments are set in the context of an ageing



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continent whose politicians are finally starting to get round to thinking about the problems of a retiring baby-boom generation that any state should have foreseen for a decade or more. Certain states - most notably in Scandinavia - have gripped the issue and worked to keep birth rates up, labour market participation high, and saving levels sufficient to deal with the pension's burden. While the population problems may be severe in the new



Even maps of Europe can be fun...

Member States, at least economic growth remains a couple of percentage points ahead of Europe's traditional power-houses, France and Germany.

In short, what we are today seeing is a reverse of the traditional economic arrangements in Europe - while the centre has enjoyed its comparative advantages in the decades since the European integration process started, today we witness a periphery which has undoubtedly more economic dynamism and arguably has had more responsible political and economic management at the national level for some time. Further, while Germany and France complain

about an erosion of social standards as a result of the Lisbon strategy, it is Finland and Sweden that have managed to develop an extremely generous social system yet come close to the top of the Commission's Lisbon scorecards.

“The large political challenges of recent times are behind us, and now it is time to get down to the grind of renewing post-industrial economies.”

So it is perhaps no wonder that there is a lack of feel-good in European politics at present. The large political challenges of recent times are behind us, and now it is

time to get down to the grind of renewing post-industrial economies. The traditional Member States, always ready to lead the game (and willing to try to do so still - see Chirac's behaviour at the spring European Council!), are in danger of finding themselves gripping onto an economic model that lessens their political credibility.

Let us not forget: we do have considerable economic dynamism within Europe; we do have social protection and state systems that are the envy of the rest of the world. But with the current generation of leaders of the EU's Member States, and a Commission President who has so far seemed to ignore the traditional supranational vocation of that institution, we have no clear direction, no leadership and no sense of feel good. As federalists, we must have hope for the future, hope for politics, and hope that a future generation can give Europe the direction it needs.

EU-US relations: Are Americans From Mars and Europeans From Venus?

Every time one describes EU-US relations it is worthwhile quoting Robert Kagan's famous citation - "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus" a dissimilarity that is due, I believe, to how the world is perceived by them. In the last few decades the perspectives of both the EU and the United States have been swerving greatly and the power equation has modified considerably, having as a result different perceptions, approaches and verdicts to international law and international institutions. However recent occurrences have slightly improved the situation although the question why these divergences arose between these two powers is still at hand.

There were several vague explanations linked to the events that took place in the last decade while factual clarifications lie on how both continents approach the concerns. The question mentioned above is not subject to a simple answer, however there are aspects that are more than evident and easier to put in simple words.

Europe, proceeding as a new creation of the world order tends to appeal to a softer way of solving discrepancies, using diplomatic tactics, economic sanctions or inducing changes through peaceful negotiations. Europeans think that acting through peaceful intervention is the best way to achieve democracy, freedom and prosperity rather than use the sword as an alternative. Europeans believe that as long as there is a space for non-violent motions, a confrontation strategy will be always excluded.

Meanwhile the US, exercising power and almost all the time acting unilaterally with the scope of attaining democracy and freedom in the world, faces the problems and threats directly leaving out any kind of courteousness. But we do not have to forget the fact that there is a big difference in military capacities that the United States and the EU possess, the latter being limited in this area and only now reaching a developing point. For instance, the United States is very capable in using its armed forces to stabilise the circumstances that might come into sight, though the EU can only enter the stage providing peacekeeping forces (as it did in FYROM) or in other words as some Europeans put it, the division of labour consists of the United States "making the dinner" and the Europeans "doing the dishes". It doesn't have to be taken as an offence for Europeans as the US is

spending far more on its military (a little over 3 percent of its GDP) than Europeans do but again as stated above, it is a matter of resolving conflicts using different strategies, having different priorities, classifying the "challenges" in a diverse order and seeing the world through different eyes. No matter how both strategic partners thus perceive the world their cooperation is still vital and fundamental.

Coming back to the most recent events, President G. W. Bush's visit to the European continent marked an important step in the transatlantic relations and started a new chapter of cooperation and mutual support. Surprisingly or not, EU leaders and the United States President were capable to find in a range of various concerns a common voice, healing this way the wounds provoked by the Iraq crisis. For the time being the United States reached an agreement with Europe to support the reconstruction of Iraq, backing the foreign policy of spreading democracy and freedom in the world and working together on eradicating the terrorism and dispersing the arms of mass destruction, hence there are

still subjects at the moment that remained unsolved or better said not being tackled due to their sensitive character. For instance, Iran's predicament, the

proposed EU lift of arms embargo on China, the non-ratification by the US of Kyoto Protocol and the statutes of the International Criminal Court. Of course these will not serve as hindrances in the future cooperation between both the EU and the US as they are not urgent issues to be dealt with but small steps should be taken in that direction. Regarding the transatlantic economic cooperation, both continents share the common view of promoting trade liberalisation through WTO and continue finding alternative means of resolving disputes.

At the present time, even if the power gap is narrowing slowly there is a significant gradual recovery of transatlantic relations which is leading to the removal of any major disagreements they have had in the past and restoring the once existing mutual aid.

...even if the power gap is narrowing slowly there is a significant gradual recovery of transatlantic relations...



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A Little Less Conversation, A Little More Action, A EUROPEAN WIDE NO CAMPAIGN: SHOULD WE BE AFRAID?

"All lies and tricks"

The propagandistic warnings of the European wide No campaign may appear to many as fruitless lies, but for the majority of citizens, who are anything but experts of European politics, their sceptic words are more than convincing. This is not only a wake up call for Federalists, integrationalists and pro Europeans who may seem all the more subdued as the opposing side grows in credibility, but also suggests that the Yes side will have to work collectively in order to make a stronger case for the ratification of the Constitution.

The view taken by the No campaign is that the ratification process is a superficial means of demonstrating that democracy in the Union essentially exists but that in reality, the Constitution will be ratified even without public support at referendums. Painting the picture of dishonest elites sitting in Brussels has always been successful in crating a negative EU image, and one that is being used in their campaign.

"Je Garde la France"

The No campaign as we know is particularly active in countries holding referenda, such as the UK, France and Denmark.

The French "Ensemble pour le Oui" has recently been faced to react to a sudden rise in the No support, evidenced by opinion polls currently suggesting that around 52% of French voters will oppose the Constitution; giving a 12% increase in the No vote since the last poll which took place in March.

The no campaign in France has been lacking financial resources and is receiving no public funding, but has nevertheless been able to organise many protest actions. The *Front National* (FN) is succeeding in creating additional confusion by linking the European constitutional debate with Turkey's accession in the European Union. The high opposition to Turkish enlargement and further government dissatisfaction are having a serious increasing effect on the French public opinion. Gaullists and Republicans are also among those who have been highlighting questions of sovereignty and national identity. However, whether these slightly outdated issues of nationalism will jeopardize the ratification process is still to be seen.

But these alarming figures from France have been welcomed by the No campaign in other countries and

have boosted their assurance and determination to campaign against. For others sitting on the No bench, it is a simple realisation that if France rejects the document it could all be over and buried.

"Don't ditch democracy"

This has been well received in the UK, where many members of parliament are waiting for another EU country to reject the Constitution before the UK referendum in order to avoid national embarrassment. The *United Kingdom Independence Party* (UKIP) was one of the most successful parties in England in the last EP elections, winning more votes than Labour and the Conservatives in certain regions. Their rising presence and support in the country has allowed for confusion and ignorance to spread. The *Democracy Movement*, along similar lines has been among some of the most active campaign groups, directly demonstrating on the streets of England asking citizens not to "ditch democracy". As in France, these groups have been combining unpopular European issues with the constitution debate, such as the Euro, the British rebate and speculation on the emergence of a European wide police state.

"Europe still has problems and the Constitution won't solve them"

And the issue of democracy has certainly been a priority on the agenda of the No campaign. In countries such as Italy and Germany, where EU enthusiasm is particularly evident, political pressure to hold a referendum from certain groups has been increasing, particularly by the *Lega Nord* in Italy. The extreme right organisation that campaigns for Federalism but opposes the European Union as it stands has been making itself heard in Italy after continuous demonstrations against the document, highlighting that the process of ratification is undemocratic, and like other Member States it should have the right to express itself through a referendum. The Lega outline that the Constitution, initially drawn to simplify the legal basis of the EU does nothing to solve its major problems and does little to preserve regional identity.

“...this requires a fast and efficient response in reacting to a No campaign that is well established and ever so strong...”

The Europe wide No campaign is present and active, and it is having a significant effect on the European citizens. Certainly, this effectiveness varies from country to country, and is linked very much with national issues. For the Yes side, this requires a fast and efficient response in reacting to a No campaign that is well established and ever so strong. Time for action!



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European Union and Serbia - An Odd Couple

Some fifteen years ago a Belgrade graffiti "Serbia is not Suburbia" showed the true feeling of Serbian people, but today, after ten painful years of isolation and four years of excruciating transition, Serbia is left standing on the outskirts of the European family.

The European option was always popular among the Serbian people. Even after the bombing campaign the support for the European Union exceeded fifty percent. It grew enormously after the overthrowing of Milosevic in 2000, and now it is on steady seventy-five percent. But, why then only 129 out of 250 MPs in the Serbian Parliament voted for the Resolution on Joining the European Union? And why is Serbia still the last in line for Brussels? This only shows that it is high time for decisive action if Serbia wishes to avoid the perspective of becoming a black hole of Europe. But, equally bad as this perspective are the internal conditions for overcoming this difficult state.

European Union is not a charity organization and it accepts only the ones who follow the rules of the game. As it proved in the past years, those rules might be more difficult than the politicians in Serbia expected. The problems that Serbia is facing on its

way to the EU do not stem from the standards and criteria set by the EU (at least not for now), but the lack of political will, courage and strength to cope with the problems in Serbia itself and the State Union of Serbia and



Map of Serbia

When instead of general and rather vague questions on the polls, the citizens answer the more concrete ones

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Montenegro. As time goes by, Serbia's journey to Europe reaches more and more obstacles, and its tempo and direction become less and less certain. As it seems, Serbia will watch the next enlargement from a position even further away from the one it had on May 1, 2004.



Belgrade

regarding the process of European integrations; we can notice the usual stratification among those who support the idea of the Union in general. Most of them are not prepared to send the indicted war criminals to The Hague in exchange for that idea, some are afraid that the competition would leave them without jobs, others do not

speak foreign languages or have never felt 'either the smell or taste' of the Union (like, for example, the seventy percent of Serbian student who have never set foot out of the country).

How can the 'European option' be strengthened in this situation? First, the idea of joining the EU cannot be 'sold' as a beauty lotion, it must be shown that European integration needs a lot of work and sacrifice which would lead to satisfaction, but not immediately. Also, the NGO sector and the media can on their own, or with some support promote the European option and bring Europe closer to the people. And finally, there would be no much done without the involvement of a large number of citizens and organizations in the process. With every step closer to the goal, the level of knowledge should be higher, and joining would be successful only if the public fully understands the process and support it completely.

The first step in this process is bringing Europe Day closer to the ordinary citizens in Serbia, showing that there exists at least a day in the year when a Portuguese and an Estonian feel as one, proud to be European, showing that Europe is not some far away planet, but a natural habitat.

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TOUR DE YES!BUS

By travelling 3.700 km on the road and another thousand on the boat, 43 Jeffers spent 8 wicked days of bus racing across Southern Europe living the adventure of JEF-Greece's YES!BUS.

The purpose was to support the yes vote in the Spanish referendum for the European Constitution, with additional support actions in France and Italy, thus showing the solidarity spirit among European citizens. The project started on the 14th February and ran until the 23rd, with many events and street actions in different Southern European cities.

The 14th February marked the launch of the project with an official reception and information event at the European Parliament Office in Athens. The Deputy Director of the European Parliament Office in Athens Mr. Kokkalas informed the YES!BUS participants and other Greek Jeffers about the Treaty Establishing a European Constitution with emphasis given on functional issues in addition to stressing the importance of the ratification of the Constitution for the future of the European Union. His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador in Athens Juan Ramon Martinez Galazar continued the discussion by presenting the official Spanish Government approach to the European Constitution, while explaining the need for the referendum in Spain and stressing the importance of his government for a high participation rate - though this was not achieved in the end. The event was concluded with a street action in the centre of Athens, at the *S y n t a g m a* ('Constitution') square.

Having spent 2 days travelling via Italy and France, the group of Greek Jeffers arrived in Barcelona on the 17th of February. The hosts, JEF-Catalunya in collaboration with JEF-Europe organized a briefing of all participants on the referendum in Spain and, in particular, the situation in Catalonia to better prepare the YES!BUS Jeffers to promote the yes vote the following day.

Friday the 18th was the principal activity day in Barcelona and the prime destination of the YES!BUS. A

very innovative program had been planned and started early in the morning with the pick up and preparation of the 2.500 "European Constitution" brand yoghurts that were to be distributed. Greek Jeffers and the JEF-Catalunya and JEF-Europe teams split in 4 groups across main squares and attractions of the city (including the Sagrada Familia, La Rambla and Montjuic) and there they distributed the Constitutional yoghurts and of course leaflets urging the Spanish to vote for the Constitution. Communication took place both in English and in the basics of Catalan that the Greeks had picked up earlier that day.

The journey of the YES!BUS continued from Barcelona to Marseille, where the team of JEF Bouche du Rhone organized a long walk along Marseille's main commercial streets (La Canebiere, Rue de Rome) ending up in Place de la Prefecture, where hundreds of EU Constitution related publicity material were distributed to the friendly and interested citizens of Marseille.

February 20th was a day in Aix en Provence with a dedicated info stand in the central square, where almost 3.000 brochures were distributed. Apart from the info stand that operated all morning, groups were set that distributed brochures along city's main squares and streets, including the famous Cours Mirabeau. Members of the European Movement France also joined the YES! actions in town, sharing their years of experience in

European affairs. The day ended with the first ever JEF street action in the Principality of Monaco, in front of the Casino of Monte Carlo!

S n o w y Olympic Torino was the buses last stop (February, 21st) after many

hours of travelling from France due to delays caused by the strong snowstorm in the region. Despite the weather and with the assistance of JEF Italy's Torino section a centrally located info-stand was in place in front of the university and 3.000 interesting leaflets in Italian were distributed to the youngsters of Torino, who did show increased interest in the European Constitution. The YES!BUS returned to Athens on February 23rd after 2 days of travelling.

All in all, this innovative project had an impressive public outreach of more than 12.000 European citizens, while its concept has inspired similar actions in other European countries. The Tour de YES!BUS is not over yet though: next stop PARIS!



YES!BUS and supporters



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As an international observer in Ukraine

On December 26 2004, Ukrainians went to the polls for the third time to vote for their president - an election which had drawn the attention of the international community. I had the chance to be involved in this historic event as an observer for the OSCE. The sudden interest of the international community in the presidential election had immediately drawn my attention, but furthermore I wanted to understand the meaning of Ukraine's Orange Revolution for us as European citizens. I was convinced that the Ukrainian elections were of utmost importance to the European Union, considering the current debate about its borders. Ukraine's potential accession to the EU was certainly in the background of the Ukrainian elections.

Each observer team had an interpreter and a car plus driver. My colleague from the Czech Republic and I were sent to the region of Lugansk, close to the Russian border - well-known for its support for Viktor Yanukovich - and I was glad to be able to see this other face of the Ukraine as well. My time as a short-term observer was a wonderful experience. Here are a few of the many observations I had the opportunity to make during my stay in Ukraine.

Uncertainty and fear

Viktor Yuschchenko has to face many serious challenges both on the domestic and international level. The most crucial domestic challenge is the problem of division by ethnicity, language and region. Ukrainians from the region of Lugansk, in particular, have deep doubts regarding the future of their country. As Russian native speakers and living close the Russian border, they hope in general to keep a good relationship with Russia. But this view is not shared by the majority in the central and Western parts of the country. This implies that most voters have been influenced by their region of origin. Lugansk was covered in blue, while Kiev was decorated in the famous orange. In both places, it seemed as if there was no alternative to having the same opinion as the majority. Therefore, I would like to emphasize on the risk of an identity crisis in Ukraine.

Everyday life is very hard for the Ukrainian people. When you have good political connections, you can get a well paid job, but this only applies to a small minority. This is why Ukrainians openly demand security and a

sense of pride from the political and administrative structures. This feeling is quite unfamiliar to most Western citizens.

Despite these difficulties, Ukrainian people from L'viv to Donetsk have a common demand for a peaceful Ukraine dedicated to economic growth and prosperity. But before eventually joining the EU, Ukrainians have to be able to find a consensus on their identity as far as their relation to Russia and the EU is concerned.

Ukraine's case for EU accession

Ukraine's possible entry into the EU can only be successfully realized after the reconciliation of both parts of the country. Even if the whole world is not watching Ukraine anymore as the were a few months ago, the political struggle ignited in November 2004 has not yet ended.

But before eventually joining the EU, Ukrainians have to be able to find a consensus on their identity as far as their relation to Russia and the EU is concerned.

The common choice has unfortunately been limited to either the support for Yuschchenko for those in favour of Ukraine's independence, or support for Yanukovich, because of political intimidations and press manipulations. Contrary to most people, who only followed the general media coverage, I read a lot about Ukraine before becoming an observer which is necessary to understand the political struggle. Despite the fact that the role of Russia in Ukraine has been a matter of controversy, the Russian culture is present in everyday life. Therefore, if Ukraine one day joins the EU, we can not demand that Ukraine breaks of its strong ties with Russia. A balance between East and West has to be reached with the new president.

As it will not be easy for the newly elected president to fulfil the high expectations, I am afraid that in a few years Ukrainians could again be disappointed, and who knows what will happen in this case. I am fully aware of the fact that in comparison to the Western media my conclusion sounds very sceptical, but I have been deployed to the Eastern part of Ukraine, where the view on the political struggle is quite different to that of Kiev.

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Give Europe your Say! Event

Belgium, Brussels, 21-23 January 2005

JEF-Europe organised a gathering of more than 100 youngsters from 30 different countries, focussing on the new European Constitution and on the new Face they want for Europe. The event was the highlight of the "Give Europe a Face" campaign, which started last 1st of May and gave a framework for activities and events around the European Parliamentary elections related to the Constitution.

"Give Europe Your Say - Face the Constitution Debate" was a completely new format for an event of this size. The idea was to simulate an Oxford-debate about the Constitution - a very interactive format, giving everyone a chance to participate and speak. The debates were based on imaginary countries with characteristics though reflecting real EU member states, and therefore managed to provide the participants with an understanding for the

differences in the debates and arguments in the various countries.

The event was also strongly linked to the YES-campaign for the Constitution, which was initiated by JEF-Europe, the International European Movement, UEF and AEGEE.



The event started on Friday afternoon with an opening panel composed of Jo Leinen MEP, Chairman of the

Committee on Constitutional Affairs and President of the UEF, Jean-Luc Dehaene MEP, former Prime Minister of Belgium and former Vice-President of the European Convention, and Renaldas Vaisbrodas, President of the European Youth Forum. The Saturday focussed on debates in small groups, where all individual participants were encouraged to express their opinions. The final debate took place on Sunday morning. Euractiv's Julian Hale chaired the debate and he posed questions for the debaters, countering their arguments. The closing speech was held by Richard Corbett MEP, Co-Rapporteur of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

The event was a huge success and several sections of JEF are planning to copy this kind of debate in their own countries.



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Exploring the Constitution in a Wintry Berlinheir

Berlin, Germany, 25-27 February 2005

For the 6th year in a row JEF-Germany organised its international Berlin Seminar. This year the focus was not surprisingly centred on the Constitution that had less then a week earlier been massively embraced in the first constitutional referendum in Spain. Unwilling to stand by and just watch, more than 100 enthusiastic JEFers from 16 different countries decided to spend their weekend in a wintry Berlin, to explore where Europe stands at present: "Between Aim and Reality: Ratifying the European Constitution".

Right at the beginning of the *Bundestag* ratification process it was important to dive into the problems and possibilities of the coming year, the dangers

and opportunities of the Constitution and the federalists' answers to these questions. Also the role of governments, parliaments, the EP, the Commission, NGOs and not the



least of JEF was discussed in panels as in working groups. As the JEF-tradition bids, political discussion and activism was supported by all-night dancing-and-drinking-session, and indeed we enjoyed and survived two nights of JEF-parties!

One of the highlights of the weekend was the launch of the German YES-Campaign, whose grand-slam opening was really made to something special through the presence of so many

JEFers from all over Europe. The 100 JEFers together with MEPs, MPs, the huge YES-balloon and hundreds of small balloons right in front of a snow covered Brandenburger Tor made quite an impressive sight! After having asked passer-bys to put down their dreams for Europe on postcards and then tied them onto helium balloons, all of the dreams were send of to the sky to either come true or not.

And so we made our way home hoping our dream of a European Constitution will come true...



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Dinner for 25 - Solidarity and Equal Rights in the EU

Slovenia, Ljubljana, 13-18 March 2005

On the week between the 13th and 18th March, Ljubljana hosted JEFers from all around Europe for a long lasting dinner for 25. The ratification process in the Member States, the shaping of the new financial perspective and further enlargement are just some of the key topics currently discussed in the EU political arena. The seminar focused on the Constitution itself, the ratification process and the building of the new financial perspective 2007 - 2013 in light of the Lisbon Declaration. Therefore, the seminar, in dealing with the EU economy and finances, introduced some relatively new topics to JEF.

All this and a lot more was discussed through lectures, panels, group discussions and informal conversations which were lead or lectured by JEF Europe EB members and experts in the fields of economics, political science and law from the Slovenian academic, governmental and business sectors.

An important part of the seminar was definitely the simulation of the decision making process in the Council of Ministers regarding the 2007 - 2013 financial perspective. With this simulation participants got a better insight of how hard and demanding the process of shaping the

future is despite the fact that we share a common future goal - a better and stronger EU.

Despite a tight and busy schedule, the participants managed to discover Ljubljana's day and night life. Traditional social activities like ice-breaking games and the international evening were spiced up with some genuine Slovenian student parties and a guided tour around Ljubljana's city centre.

The European Union is constantly facing new and new challenges but with people like JEFers and events like this seminar where we had so many fruitful debates, new ideas and a good atmosphere we must not and cannot be worried about the future of European Union and that of JEF itself.



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Ratification of the Constitution

The opening conference on Thursday evening was hosted by Pierre Moscovici, Vice President of the European Parliament and President of the French European Movement. According to him the principal problem in France is that the debate on the Constitution is by acting upon the fears of the people. Therefore, members of JEF have a lot of information work to do for the citizens and it is a necessity to "europeanise" the ratification campaign.

The different speakers invited during the seminar explained the consequences of a "no" in the French referendum. It was interesting to hear the French, the English and the Italian point of view, and, indeed, it seems that the French actually want to punish the current government in voting against the Constitution.

Finally, we discussed how to make Europe move forward. JEF France, JEF Italy and the participants of the seminar believe that federalists should start thinking about how to use the "Citizens' Initiative" proposed in Article 47 of the



Lyon, France, 31 March - 3 April 2005

Constitution as it is quite obvious that this possible campaign is linked to the future of the ratification process. The Convention method showed the importance of having a democratic and transparent debate on the Constitutional issues; if the Constitution is rejected by the citizens, the

Federalists should thus ask for a true Constituent assembly to write a new Constitutional text for the European Union, this time involving the citizens from the very beginning of the process.

On the other hand, if the Constitution is adopted by almost all the countries, we should start a new campaign to improve the text in a federal way.

Finally, it is crucial that young people are involved in European organisations and they should be even more in the future.

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The Young European Federalists (JEF) is a supranational non-party political youth organisation with over 30,000 young members from 35 European countries. The aim of JEF is to work towards the creation of a European Federation, as a step towards a peaceful, just and democratic world order.

Build the Europe you want.

The European Union is one of the biggest achievements of the European history, but it is still far from what the European citizens are entitled to expect. A true European Federation is needed to fully achieve democracy, economic prosperity, social justice and environmental protection. With JEF you can have your say on the future of Europe.

Shape the future you want.

JEF members are involved in many different activities from the international right down to the local level: putting forward the arguments for a European Federation, lobbying governments and decision-makers to support our vision of Europe, raising public awareness of European unification and its importance, promoting federalism, the political thought of "unity in diversity".

JEF-Europe, the supranational level of the organisation, provides its sections with information, publications and support, and provides its members with the ability to become involved in activities such as:

- Transnational campaigns-like the one for a European Constitution and the enlargement of the Union;
- Public events and demonstrations at the important European summits- to show that citizens support federal Europe;
- Seminars on European unification and federalism- allowing young people from all over Europe to meet each other.

JEF is the youth section of the Union of European Federalists and is a member of the International European Movement and the World Federalist Movement.

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