

Jean-Claude Juncker states that there will be a period for reflection and discussion but the process to ratify the Constitutional Treaty will continue with no renegotiation

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At the end of the first day of the European Council being held on 16 and 17 June 2005 in Brussels, Jean-Claude Juncker, current President of the European Council, made the following statement regarding ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and the decisions taken on this issue by Heads of State and Government.

"Together with the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament, who sat in on all our discussions at my invitation – the Parliament played its part in all the preparatory work leading to the Constitution – we have carefully considered the issues surrounding ratification of the Constitutional Treaty.

We held a lengthy debate with contributions from all the Prime Ministers and Heads of Government and State as well as from the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament.

We think that the Constitutional Treaty is the right answer to many questions posed by people in Europe. We feel, therefore, that the ratification process must continue. This Treaty is the best one, which means that its renegotiation cannot even be envisaged.

Secondly, we have taken note with regret – with a heavy heart as I said the other day – of the French and Dutch rejection of the draft Constitutional Treaty. The questions and issues raised during the debates in the Netherlands and France, and in other countries too, and the fears expressed, mean that we cannot continue as if nothing had happened.

This leads us to think that a period for reflection, clarification and discussion is called for both in the countries which have ratified the Treaty and in those which have still to do so. During this period, changes should be seen in all these countries in the European Union's institutions, the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council

and the Member States, civil society, management and labour, national parliaments, political parties and other players.

Europe must pay more attention to what its citizens are saying. I would like to refer specifically here to the ideas put forward yesterday by the President of the Commission as to how this period for reflection should be organised. Following the French "non" and the Dutch "nej", we do not feel that the date initially planned for a report on ratification of the Treaty, the 1 November 2006, is still tenable, since those countries which have not yet ratified the Treaty will be unable to furnish a clear reply before mid 2007.

10 EU Member States have ratified the draft Constitutional Treaty. The remainder intend doing so either via a referendum or by parliamentary vote. The European Council fully understands that those Member States who must hold a referendum before ratification may need a longer and more intense period for reflection, clarification and discussion than those countries which ratify via parliamentary vote. If you have to talk, if you have to have a debate, if in fact, as José Manuel Barroso said, you have a plan D involving dialogue and debate with the nation, you need more time.

Member States who wish to ratify the Treaty via parliamentary vote will do so during the clarification debate. If they wish to postpone this until later they may do so.

Member States who intend holding a referendum will take a sovereign and independent decision regarding the date on which it will be held.

All the members of the European Council have stated that they understand the need of countries which intend holding a referendum for more time.

In brief: the ratification process will continue. There won't be any renegotiation because there never was a plan B, but there is a plan D involving dialogue and debate. Member States who intend ratifying via parliamentary vote will do so when they deem this to be opportune. Member States who intend holding a referendum will also do so when they deem this opportune. The remaining Member States understand that the period for clarification could last longer in countries holding a referendum than in other countries. The European Council will look under the Austrian Presidency at the situation regarding debates on ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in all the European Union's Member States."