

MARTENS' FIRST REFLECTION ON THE POST-REFERENDA EUROPE

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EPP President Wilfried Martens presented on October 4 in Paris, his first reflection on the the post-referenda Europe:

The European Union is in a deep crisis. After the negative results of the referenda in France and the Netherlands it is clear that there is no plan for saving the Constitution despite the pretence by some politicians such as Laurent Fabius in France.

Moreover there is a budgetary crisis in the European Union and disagreement on the perspectives 2006-2013.

At the European Summit of June 2005 the Heads of State and Governments allowed themselves a 1 year period of reflection.

The British Presidency now decided that at the next Summit in London on 27 and 28 October 2005 they will neither discuss the Constitution, nor the budget; instead they will solely dwell on different social models. Although this is a worthy subject for discussion it is not sufficient at this time of crisis.

We all face the huge challenges and especially us, as members of the biggest European political family, founded 30 years ago and united today with more than 60 member parties in the European People's Party.

President Giscard d'Estaing recently declared: The European system functions badly. France has no European project anymore. The Europeans have no European project.

We have to seriously take stock of our present situation and work out how we should respond.

In defense of the heritage of the founding fathers we hope that this current crisis is transformed into a new impetus for the further integration of the European Union. We want a new popular project for Europe. It is our goal to bring this about at the next EPP Congress in Rome on 30 and 31 March 2006.

The debates in the various EPP Working Groups and at in the Member Parties will contribute to this. The initiatives by the Member Parties such as UMP's recent Convention on Europe and creation of its debate Club Les Européens are worthy responses for the promotion of this new re-launch.

1. What kind of Europe do we want? I observed that during the 12 years that I was member of the European Council in my capacity as head of the Belgian government and the subsequent 15 years as President of the EPP, the fundamental debate on identity, finality and the borders of the EU was held at bay.

The present European Treaty sets out indirectly the borders: the EU is open to all European states that respect the values of the Union and are committed to commonly promote these. But for our citizens our common borders are an essential element for the auto-comprehension of the Union.

It is thus essential that we have an in-depth debate. Three years ago at the EPP congress in Estoril we decided in our document on a privileged partnership for the large neighbours of the Union. This privileged partnership has more meaning than the present neighbourhood policy and moreover, it makes reference to Jacques Delors' concentric circles.

2. We do not want a super-European state, instead we want a decentralized Union based on the member states. As we perceive it there is no opposition or contradiction between the member states and the Union. This conception is based on the principle of subsidiarity. Along this same principle, in the different member states, the regions and communities have a large autonomy.

Decision taking is to be transparent and controllable, e.g. the Council must discuss and adopt the directives, being the European laws, in public and not in secret. At the Convention we have defended a repartition with little exclusive competences for the Union and many competing competences between the Union and the Member States. Alain Lamassoure prepared this proposition in his excellent report in the European Parliament.

3. We want to bring about the social market economy. For us this means that solidarity and cohesion form a pillar of the Union; more so because the massive unemployment necessitates innovative politics and major reforms. We have to complete the Single Market in a way that globalization is no longer perceived with fear, but accepted as an opportunity.

4. We want to create a political Union with a Common Foreign and Security Policy. A common foreign policy does not exist now because we are extremely divided. For Europe to speak with one voice in the world we will have to conquer this divide. Our internal security depends on the integration of immigrants and our capacity to eradicate terrorism. In achieving this we can create a true Union of liberty, security and justice.

5. We have to save the reforms put forward by the Convention. The EPP conceived this project at its Congress in Estoril and has invested significantly in same: amongst the 13 members of the Presidency 7 belong to the EPP amongst which Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, its President. The Convention wanted the Union to be re-founded and be more democratic, more transparent, more efficient and closer to the citizens. We should not lose these advantages. We have to save them.

6. The European Union needs leaders that defend the common interest and common projects. As

member of the European Council, I was privileged to work together with heads of state and government that participated in the realization of the single market and single currency. In the eyes of their citizens those leaders symbolized, expressed and represented the big common projects. I hope and I am convinced that a new generation will emerge that will again pick up the torch.

I remain convinced that the EPP leaders will complete the huge tasks ahead and bring along our citizens with the European ideals.

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