

My Ten Reasons To Say 'Yes'

by François Hollande
Leader of the French *Parti Socialiste*.



My 'yes' is in keeping with the longstanding pro-European Socialist tradition. It is a sincere and determined 'yes', as other steps in European construction await us. It is a 'yes' of solidarity with the European left and progressives around the world, for whom Europe is an example. It is a coherent 'yes' in the face of a 'no', which would open a serious crisis. In short, a victorious 'yes' for all socialists.

Europe was first built around a common market and then a single currency. It is undeniably an economic power; it is not a political power. The enlargement to twenty-five member states requires a clearer and simpler decision-making process, at a time when Bush's re-election confirms the wish of the United States to decide alone on the fate of the world. Saying 'no' today would mean paralysing the European construction process on a long-term basis and breaking our bond with the European left. I want to speak the truth on this issue and remain credible and faithful to what we have done since 1981 regarding the European project.

1 There is no step backwards

The European Constitution only includes improvements and does not introduce any step backwards. On the institutional level, Europe comes out strengthened with a President of the European Council elected for two and a half years, a European Commission which will originate entirely from the European Parliament, therefore from the citizens' vote, the appointment of a

European Minister for Foreign Affairs, who will, finally be able to give Europe a face and authority in the world. On the economic and social level, the values established by the Constitutional Treaty are those of full employment, sustainable development, gender equality; public services are finally confirmed and protected.

2 A Parliament with enlarged powers

The Constitutional Treaty increases the powers of the European Parliament: it is free to pass European legislation. It has extended powers to prepare the budget. It takes into account petitions from European citizens. Many national parliaments – including the French national assembly – do not hold such prerogatives. One cannot complain about the European technocracy and at the same time refuse to boost the place and role of the European Parliament, and therefore of the European citizens, who vote for it at European elections.

3 Recognising secularity

The treaty includes the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, which provides 450 million people with the best protection in the world for their rights and freedoms (protection against unfair dismissal,

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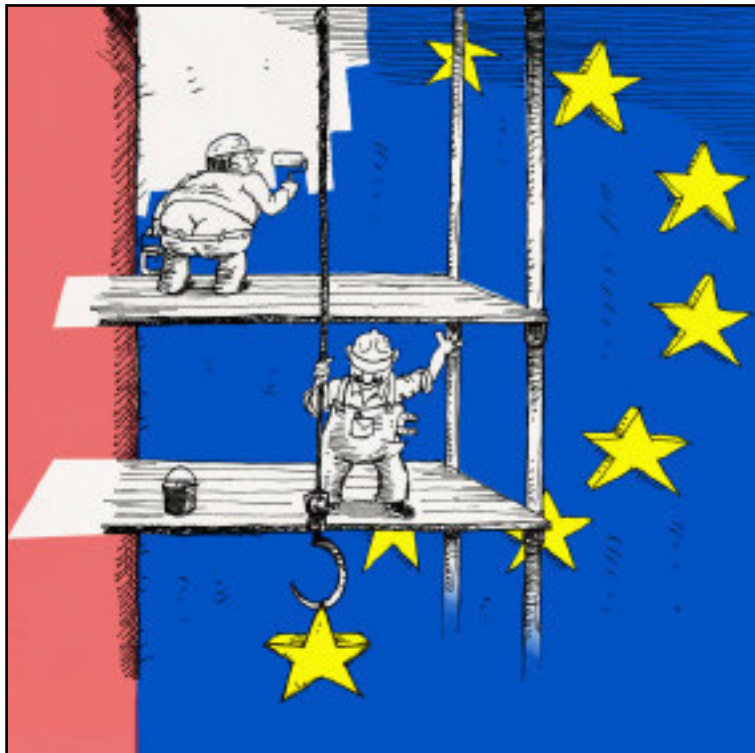
workers' right to information, gender equality, right to strike...). This charter will give citizens means to submit their case to courts to ensure that these rights are respected. The treaty recognises Europe's secular character. It allows each state to apply its own laws. The French bill on religious signs in schools is therefore validated. The way the European Parliament dealt with Mr. Buttiglione illustrates Europe's vigilance.

4 Finally a social base

Europe used to be rightly accused of only caring for the economy, markets and currency; the treaty finally gives it a social basis: - New objectives are imparted to Europe: social market economy, fight against exclusion and discriminations, social justice, territorial cohesion, cultural diversity, sustainable development... - It provides trade unions and employees with new tools to move forward on social issues: annual social summit for employment, social clause, recognition of social partners... - It enables the creation of an avant-garde for those who want to move faster and further in social and fiscal areas. It is on the basis of these improvements that the European confederation of trade unions approved almost unanimously the Constitutional Treaty! Let's take the same approach.

5 Priority to employment

For the first time, full-employment is a clear and announced objective. The European Constitution creates an economic government, facing the European Central Bank (ECB); the first to complain about this evolution was Jean-Claude Trichet, the ECB governor. This is a good sign. Countries outside the Euro, will not be able to block initiatives from the 12 members of the Eurozone.



6 Reinforced public services

For the first time, a legal basis is recognised for public services. Member states will be able to finance their public services in derogation of competition rules. Defending public services is a state policy in the first place, a choice of territorial solidarity and a budget commitment to ensure their existence.

7 Nothing is set

The new treaty introduces more flexibility to decide on partial revisions without having to discuss everything again. It gives a right of initiative to the European Parliament. Nothing is engraved in stone. From the Treaty of Rome to the Treaty of Nice, the rule of unanimity has always applied. It never prevented Europe from moving forward. If the constitutional treaty were to be rejected, the Nice Treaty would apply and it would have to be renegotiated on the basis of unanimity!

8 The left will be able to act

Europe never prevented the Jospin government from passing the 35 hour work week bill, the youth job schemes or the universal medical provision just as it does not prevent Mr. Zapatero today from implementing his social policy in Spain. It is not Europe which forces Mr. Raffarin to conduct an unfair and ineffective policy. He bears sole responsibility. A constitution or a constitutional treaty does not set any policy.

9 Progressives approve it

This treaty has the support of all European socialist parties. For European trade unions, 'the only pragmatic and realistic approach is to support it'. It would be the last straw if French socialists had all European progressives turned against them.

10 Saying 'no' would spark off a crisis

By choosing to vote 'yes', I am following the momentum of the European construction project, as French socialists have done each step of the way. None of these steps is sufficient for us. But if Europe works today, it is because each of us took responsibility in his time. A 'no' would create a European crisis and its supporters are not able to say how they would resolve it. Neither in France nor in Europe there is any alternative to

the present text. The 'sovereignists' and 'eurosceptics' would capture a victory of the 'no' and influence a possible renegotiation. To negotiate a better treaty, socialists cannot leave it up to a rightwing European Parliament, a European Council dominated by eighteen conservative governments, and a Commission led by the very liberal and atlantist Mr. Barroso. In short, Europe would be stopped in its tracks and it would take a long time before it is able to have a Constitution.

My conclusion

My 'yes' is faithful to the longstanding fight of socialists for Europe. It is a sincere and determined 'yes', as other steps in the European construction project await us. It is a 'yes' of solidarity with the European left and progressives around the world, for whom Europe is an example. It is a coherent 'yes' in the face of a 'no', which would open a serious crisis. In short, it is a victorious 'yes' for all socialists.