

THE “NO” FROM THE NETHERLANDS IS MORE THAN A SETBACK

The “no” from the Netherlands after the French one is more than a setback; it is a strong signal that the European project is badly perceived by European citizens. European policy-makers must reflect carefully on how to move forward. Deferring structural reforms is not an option but they have to be better explained and well understood.

Representing 20 million companies which employ more than 120 million workers in Europe, UNICE is in favour of this Treaty because it is balanced in the values and policies it proposes and because it creates the foundation for the clear, democratic and effective governance the European Union needs so badly. The Constitutional Treaty is favoured not only by employers but also by the European Trade Union Confederation.

This negative decision in a second founding Member State is a serious blow and places a large question mark over the Treaty’s future. It is essential that Europe’s decision-makers do not react to the resulting uncertainty by putting off the reforms identified in the Growth and Jobs strategy. The benefits of the European projects to its citizens will have to be systematically evaluated and clearly explained.

Fulfilling the Growth and Jobs strategy at both national and European levels is just as important for Europe’s future prosperity as ever. Europe can only be brought closer to its citizens if it is seen to be performing. The best way to build up this trust is through reforms to tackle the causes of sluggish economic growth and chronically high unemployment.

“This second blow for the Constitutional Treaty means that important actions will be necessary for Europe to continue to move forward. But decision-makers must not be afraid of pushing ahead with structural reforms for more growth and jobs. One of the reasons for discontent among European citizens is weak economic performance exacerbated by outdated policies. We urge the European Council and the European Commission to lead the European Union and its Member States in such a way that Europe can be considered a successful economy in the global world” says UNICE President Jürgen Strube.

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the voice of more than 20 million small, medium and large companies. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE’s members are 38 central industrial and employers federations from 32 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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