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Social Europe must be the priority

OPEN LETTER TO HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENTS FOR THE JUNE COUNCIL 2007

We, representatives of Social NGOs across Europe, have decided to openly express our concerns on the preparation of the June European Council on the revision of the EU treaties.

As civil society organisations, representing large segments of the population, we have been actively involved in the conventions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights and on the future of Europe. We have fought together with many others to promote a more democratic Union, based on fundamental rights with strong social objectives. 18 Member States have supported the steps forward in this regard by ratifying the constitutional treaty.

More than two years after the French and Dutch “no” to the constitutional treaty, EU leaders are facing a daunting task ahead of the June 2007 European Council: building consensus around the piecemeal outcomes of the “reflection period” and reconciling diverging interests in a renewed political landscape. However, one clear message has emerged among large sections of public opinion and decision-makers over the last months: as much as peace and prosperity and more recently climate change, **Social Europe is a priority EU leaders have to set themselves.**

Therefore the **Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)** must move forward building on the commitments, in relation to Social Europe, already made in the Constitutional Treaty. Social NGOs will follow this process with the utmost attention and expect as a first step that **the June summit conclusions to clearly commit the IGC to the following:**

- **A Europe based on Fundamental rights:** The full text of the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights needs to be an integral part of the treaty. Not incorporating the Charter or having just a mere reference to it would be a critical political mistake if the renegotiation is to gain people’ trust that the EU can make a difference for them;
- **Participatory democracy:** Article I.47 on participatory democracy has to be maintained as a crucial instrument in promoting people and civil society’s support and involvement in the European construction;

- **Safeguard progress made:** By keeping the horizontal clauses on gender equality (III-116), social objectives (III-117), non-discrimination (III-118) and services of general interest (III. 122)
- **A social protocol/chapter:** The idea of adding a social protocol (or chapter) is welcomed. To go beyond mere window-dressing, such a protocol has to address the issue of how the European Union can contribute to greater social cohesion and inclusion through the achievement of high level social standards across all EU Member States.

We call on you personally to live up to the responsibilities entrusted in you by people through ensuring a transparent and open process of negotiations. Do not go back to a 'closed doors' process with no public involvement. Transparency and democracy is the only way for people to feel confident that the **Europe which is built today will not serve short term narrow national interests but rather the interests of a Social Europe for all.**

Social Platform full members

ATD Fourth World International Movement
 Autism Europe
 Caritas Europa
 Combined European Bureau for Social Development (CEBSD)
 Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU (COFACE)
 Eurochild
 Eurodiaconia
 European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
 European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
 European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)
 European Blind Union (EBU)
 European Children's Network (Euronet)
 European Confederation of Workers' Co-operatives, Social Cooperatives and Participative Enterprises (CECOP)
 European Council for Non-Profit Organisations (CEDAG)
 European Disability Forum (EDF)
 European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)
 European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG)
 European Federation of Unpaid Parents and Carers at Home (FEFAF)
 European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS)
 European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
 European Social Action Network (ESAN)
 European Women's Lobby (EWL)
 European Youth Forum
 International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)
 Mental Health Europe (MHE)
 Solidar
 The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disability and their Families (Inclusion Europe)
 The European Older People's Platform (AGE)
 The European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-Europe)
 The European Volunteer Centre (CEV)
 The International Federation of the Christian Associations of Italian Workers (FAI)
 Workability Europe

Associate members

Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale (AFEM)
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