Preparation of the European Council following the Irish referendum (Brussels, 19-20 June 2008)

2007/2613(RSP) - 18/06/2008

MEPs discussed preparations for the forthcoming European Council of 19 and 20 June 2008. The main priority of this debate being the negative result of the referendum in Ireland, which was respected by the Council, the Commission and all political groups. They also underlined the need to continue the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

While a majority of the groups insisted on continuing the ratification process, some minority groups called for an immediate end to it.

The positions expressed by the different political groups are summarised as follows:

- **EPP-ED**: the President of the Group invited the European Council to analyse the situation in Ireland and called on Member States, which have not already done so, to ratify the Treaty. Questioning the meaning of the message from the Irish population, he considered it as a call for the EU to better define its missions and increase transparency. The “no” vote, in his opinion, reflected the lack of understanding of the complexity of EU legislation, for which the Parliament is partly to blame. He highlighted that the aim of the EU to guarantee peace on the continent of Europe is no longer being supported by the younger generation. The President also called on the European Council to tackle the practical concerns of citizens.
- **PES**: the President of the Group criticised the Council of Ministers for the lack of transparency of their debates. He stressed that the Irish “no” vote pointed to a crisis in confidence in national and supranational institutions. He deplored the fact that Charlie McCreevy, the Internal Market Commissioner, admitted to not even having read the Treaty. Lastly, he called on the EPP Group to pull its weight in Parliament to tackle social issues and financial market control and to oppose the Commission’s policy which deregulates the internal market to the extreme.
- **ALDE**: the leader of the Group stressed that it was not only the Commission and Parliament’s responsibility to enlighten the citizens on the Treaty, but also the national parliaments. He called for a campaign to recall the rationale behind the EU. He also invited the Council to take more interest in matters concerning Europe, namely the stimulation of trade, the fight against climate change, the fight against rising prices of food and fuel.
- **Greens/EFA**: the Group stated that the EU needed a short constitution and a Charter of fundamental rights as well as sufficient economic resources. It expressed the hope that Member States would launch a new initiative to develop a more efficient Europe, which is impossible with the Treaty of Nice.
- **UEN**: the Group representative called for more time to given to analyse Irish “no” vote and for respect to be shown for democratic opinions. He urged the EU to take on challenges such as rising food and oil prices and called for further solidarity.
- **GUE/NGL**: after the French and Dutch “no” votes, or the opposition to the Bolkestein directive, the President of the Group felt that the Irish rejection reflected the crisis of legitimacy of the current European model that increases precariousness as opposed to protecting the citizens. He also criticised the complexity of the European decision-making process, which excludes citizens. He deplores the lack of clarity of the Lisbon Treaty.
- **IND/DEM**: the representative of the Group congratulated the Irish on the outcome of the referendum. He called for a halt in the ratification process.

Responding to Members, the President of the **Commission** welcomed the consensus in the European Parliament to continue the process of ratification. According to him, the only way to construct legitimacy for it is to present concrete results to the citizens. Margot Wallström presented her reasons to continue the process: the Charter of fundamental rights and the affirmation of European values and being able to speak with one voice in the world as regards prosperity, energy and development. Recognising the need to analyse the reasons for the Irish vote, the Commission announced its intention to intensify its communication plan to further engage citizens in the European project on a permanent basis.

On behalf of the **Council**, Janez Lenari expressed his confidence in the possibility to find, as has been done in the past, a solution to the situation created by the Irish “no” vote. In the meantime, he stated that the EU should focus on the preparations for the European Council and address important issues such as the environment, global challenges and EU enlargement.