

For a constituent European Parliament in 2024

On the eve of a crucial campaign for the election in May 2024 of a European Parliament expected to be bold and determined, it looks as if the Union of European Federalists had now openly taken a stand “on the Convention agenda” – however remaining so far a kind of “Unidentified Flying Object” – by organising a webinar on 27 September 2022, the programme of which seemingly presenting the UEF’s would-be “federalist” perspective, summarised on that occasion by a restrictive set of three so-called “*proposals for a stronger and democratic Europe*”:

1. “*the recognition of **the European Parliament's direct right of initiative on legislative matters, and the recognition of the Parliament's full co-legislative rights on the EU budget***”,
2. “*the reinforcement of **the competencies and powers of the Union in areas such as health, energy and climate change, defence, and social and economic policies***”,
3. “*shifting from the unanimity rule to **qualified majority voting in all European policies, by extending the ordinary legislative procedure***”.

Per se, those three proposals are undoubtedly valid, but alone they are very insufficient. The results of the Conference on the Future of Europe cannot constitute an unsurpassable Holy Grail. At the risk of losing its *raison d'être*, the UEF cannot simply comment on and support a few adjustments to an intergovernmental process.

Has the UEF given up its federalist activism?

If the objectives of the UEF campaign for the 2024 European Parliament elections were to be limited to this, it would be an appalling failure for the federalists activists.

Firstly, because on 10 July in Brussels, the UEF Federal Committee adopted a resolution presented by its Political Committee No. 3 (“Foreign Affairs and Security”): “*A European Federal State, a condition for an effective European defence and continental geopolitical responsibility*”, which has the merit of being clear both in its recitals and in its conclusions.

Secondly, because in practice and given the current spectrum of governing majorities among the Member States they have very little chance if any of being included in a possible reform of the treaties through a Convention inevitably subject to revision by an Intergovernmental Conference: at least 17 governments even stand against any reform of the treaties, not to mention waiving their *de facto* veto. **With the change of majorities in Italy and Sweden, possibly also in Denmark, and in spite of the reassuring outcome of the elections in Latvia, the assumption that a Convention will actually be convened – although mentioned by the President of the European Commission in her State of the European Union address –, and for what exactly, is increasingly becoming evanescent, while Emmanuel Macron's silence is striking.**

Thirdly, the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs has itself currently removed the topic from its agenda even if other committees plan to prepare their opinions.

Such a blockage has no chance ever of being resolved by an intergovernmental process

The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences, and now the many serious concerns in the international situation with the war, on the grounds of energy, economy, foreign affairs and defence, without forgetting the environment, could not better demonstrate that our Nation States are still

too visibly divided. Engaged in misplaced competition, they give an image both externally and internally of hesitation and irresolution, of unpreparedness and uncertainty. In a word, they are weak and the peoples of Europe should be terribly worried about it.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia constitutes the latest warning to date to the EU that our common environment is not blissfully favourable to us despite our declared “values”. It clearly shows that what we urgently need now — and let us (UEF) dare to express it openly and boldly — is a **European federal State**, democratic, protective, and sovereign. We witness day after day the persistent and increasingly dramatic inability of the Member States governments to set up a true, effective and efficient European defence. At the time of the cruel and unjust war imposed by Russia on Ukraine, the EU carelessly allows the United States of America to remain the sole stronghold of democracies, and their arsenal, as they did over 80 years ago. Our own military capabilities are not even sufficient to ensure our security or even our own safety should the need arise, let alone to help others. Our defence industrial base is unable to increase sufficiently its production.

The only way to overcome this is to refer to the European people, to the *demos*, who have to be called upon to decide and put an end to the ongoing procrastination.

At the International Peace Congress in 1849, 173 years ago, Victor Hugo proposed to found “the United States of Europe” on the American model. Had it been done, it would have avoided millions of deaths and traumas. On 9 May 1950, 72 years ago, Schuman promised a European federation while proposing to create it by a treaty signed between States, which is inconsistent and contradictory. In 1984 — 38 years ago! —, without having felt the need to obtain prior authorisation, the European Parliament, finally elected by direct universal suffrage, adopted by a legitimate vote Altiero Spinelli's draft constitution, which the Member States subsequently refused to ratify.

The time is no longer to reshape international, and therefore intergovernmental, treaties

They have long largely proven their inherent limits. To continue along this path would mean accepting that Europe will remain on the fringes of history for a long, long time to come and even disappear from the group of those who count and make it.

It is high time the current technocratic, poorly democratic and opaque institutions of the EU, so clumsy in crises management and alone unable to guarantee us peace, to be substituted for a **federal State** capable of creating what we need most: a collective European capacity for political and, let's be truly realistic, military action.

A movement of activists like the UEF should react more strongly than ever to the Member States governments' shortcomings. Diplomats, national political parties and governments have different concerns, tempo and agendas than federalist activists. They only think of what they deem possible, desirable or compatible with their national political programmes, and they don't imagine that a federal Europe can happen: WE BELIEVE THAT IT MUST AND THAT IT WILL! And we must not resign to or lock ourselves into a utopia-killing endless and hopeless would-be pragmatism. This is, indeed, what all the members of the Spinelli Group who were present this year in Ventotene on 28, 29 and 30 August firmly advocated for: a true constitution!

It is not yet another reform of the treaties that the UEF must request today, but a **real Constitution**, not a new so-called “constitutional treaty” (what a mind-boggling oxymoron!) as in 2004. A constitution can never be established by an international treaty.

A government does, no more than a monarch, never spontaneously renounce its authority, nor concede a truly democratic constitution

It is up to the citizens to give it to themselves and thereby establish themselves as a united people. It's what Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Guy Verhofstadt already said in 2012 in their book¹: ***“The emancipation of the Europeans ‘will be the work of the citizens themselves’.”***

It is with this aim of a **real Constitution** that the UEF must proudly campaign among European citizens throughout the 19 months that remain until the next European elections.

The UEF should start right now to work on the constituent role of the European Parliament in 2024 by building an alliance of innovators across the European parties and knowing that it may be in the minority, but that the immobilists will also be a minority and that whoever eventually wins the “swamp” in the next European Parliament will prevail.

The European Parliament to be elected in 2024 must go beyond the Resolution ([P9_TA\(2022\)0244](#)) adopted on 9 June 2022 *“on the call for a Convention for the revision of the Treaties”* and establish itself as a constituent assembly, notwithstanding also involving other representatives of the civil society to a large extent in its works.

And much more than to the Member States, it will be up to the European citizen-voters to adopt the draft constitution democratically and ratify it. Member State governments are democratically legitimate at home, not at the European level. It is now high time to resort to democracy and to respect the European... *demos*, i.e. those who freely elect their Parliament.

There is no point in going on complaining day after day about the imperfection of the European institutions and their lack of democratic oversight

Too much time has been wasted. The institutions are not finished, let us insist that they be without further delay.

In his address to the European Parliament on 25 October 1989, François Mitterrand already insisted *“on the importance of economic and monetary union, the future social charter and **the construction of a political Europe** in the face of the changes in the countries of Eastern Europe, cooperation with the latter and more particularly aid to Poland”*. He notably declared *“We need to move faster and **ensure the democratic legitimacy of our decisions**. This can only be done **with renewed institutions**. As we can see and understand, Economic and Monetary Union will mean that a decisive step will have been taken towards the objective that must be set, **the political union of the Community**”*. However, the French president refused the political union proposed by Chancellor Kohl, even though Kohl had explained to him, in vain, that federalism is the only relevant form of supranational political integration. *“This would have closed our internal rifts, would have brought us the sharing of a common destiny, a destiny that implies common responsibilities for defence and security”*, according to General Henri Bentégeat.²

¹ “For Europe! Manifesto for a post-national revolution in Europe” (French-language edition *“Debout l’Europe ! Manifeste pour une révolution post-nationale en Europe”*)

² See Henri Bentégeat, “Quelles aspirations pour la défense européenne” in Álvaro de Vasconcelos (ed.), *Quelle défense européenne en 2020*, Paris, IESUE, 3rd ed.

Let us stop moping around again and again in fear of differential integration: this is indeed what already exists in many areas. Europe must gain confidence in itself. Repeated polls suggest that **in most Member States if not all, a high percentage, and in many a clear majority of European citizens are in favour of a federal Europe.**

Let us not deny our deep federalist convictions in favour of a mere interest in the various policies pursued by the EU in the current intergovernmental state of its institutions.

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First signatories:

Pier Virgilio DASTOLI, Jean MARSIA, François MENNERAT, Michele CIAVARINI AZZI (on behalf of UEF Belgium), Catherine VIEILLEDENT, Ivo KAPLAN, Christopher GLÜCK, Francesco FRANCO, Sebastiano PUTOTO, Georgio CLAROTTI, Hervé MORITZ, Νίκος ΓΙΑΝΝΉΣ (Nikos YANNIS), Alain CALMES, George KOLYVAS,

If you too wish to endorse this position in favour of a debate on the objectives that should inspire the campaign for the 2024 European elections and join in, you can sign hereafter. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1mw1rveXL_VosADNG_-YiiEuOhG98sVdtuInTsAJ0Bt8/edit. Thank you.