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SME UNION President Leitl says Irish no is a chance for Europe

“The rejection of the Treaty of Lisbon is bitter, but not a tragedy”, concludes SME UNION President Leitl at the aftermath of the negative outcome of the Irish referendum on the EU reform treaty. “Now it is the time for those who want a real consolidation of Europe.”

“Not as a crisis, but as a chance” sees Christoph Leitl as president of the SME UNION of the EPP the negative outcome of the EU referendum in Ireland. “At first sight this was a textbook example for a Friday 13th. The rejection of the Irish people of the Lisbon Treaty is bitter and a clear defeat”, Leitl summarized. “But Europe has to, and is virtually obligated to look ahead. Most EU citizens want more Europe, not less. And they want a strong Europe which responds to their everyday problems as well as that the EU speaks with one strong international voice. Numerous EU surveys prove that.”

“Therefore it is high time, that those countries which are interested in a real consolidation and further integration of the EU get real and set concrete actions. Now is the time for those countries which want to develop joint strategies in the social area, in research, environment or security beyond a pure economic community”, Leitl emphasized. “Just like there are two groups of countries within the EU Schengen agreement, or like there are Members and Non Members in the Euro zone, it should in general be possible that certain countries can form a group which works closer together than others. This possibility already exists since the Treaty of Nice and should be made use of now”, insisted Leitl.

“Even if the Treaty of Lisbon would have been an important and necessary step towards the modernization of Europe and for further enlargements, Europe will not break by the Irish ‘no’ vote. Now every Member State has to decide for itself if it wants more or less Europe in the future. If it wants to be part of a pure economic community or also strive for a joint political framework”, Leitl said. “The challenges which Europe is facing - no matter if it is globalization or further enlargement steps – are simply too big as that one single Member State can stop the integration for the entire continent.”

Nevertheless, despite of two different speeds, the EU must not become an exclusive club for a few countries. The possibility needs to be given that latecomers join the integrated core group in the future as soon as they want and are ready. “Europe has proven its ability to prosper in diversity. In order to stay strong, Europe must show its will to act as a union – time will show in which way this will take place.”

Further information: sme@sme-union.org, www.sme-union.org; Tel: +32/2/233 38 38

The SME UNION (Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Union) of the EPP (European People’s Party) is the business organization of the EPP and network of pro-business Christian-Democrat, Conservative and Center Right politicians and political organizations. As officially recognized EPP Association its main objective is to shape EU policy in a more SME friendly way.

www.sme-union.org