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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **France rejects European constitution**

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**31 May, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **France rejects European constitution**

**BNE:** A shell-shocked Europe is today coming to terms with the French rejection of the European Union constitution. The French people voted with a decisive "non" against the charter, which is designed to pave the way for a more streamlined Europe. President Jacques Chirac was out on a damage limitation exercise, clearly deflated by the fact that his country becomes the first to turn down deeper European integration. Despite the crushing defeat, the 72-year-old Mr. Chirac displayed his trademark fiery resolve and committed himself to pressing ahead with the ratification process. He ignored calls for his resignation and defiantly stated the constitution would one day prevail.

The future for the 25-country bloc is now uncertain. Another nail in the coffin for a federal Europe could arrive as early as Wednesday (June 1) if Holland also says "no" in its referendum. It is widely believed that France's rejection will spur on Dutch doubters to follow suit. The Dutch decision may be key to the future of the constitution, which needs the full approval from all 25 member nations to become established. So far, nine countries have given it their stamp of approval. Under the constitution, Europe would have a two-year revolving presidency and a European foreign minister. It is designed to drastically reduce the bureaucracy that currently clogs much decision making in Europe. U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair somberly called for "a time for reflection".

## WARM-UPS

**1. YES / NO:** One student sits in the "yes/no chair". His/her partner(s) fire(s) questions at him/her. The student in the chair must try to answer as many questions as they can without saying "yes" or "no". The winner is the person who can answer the most questions without saying "yes" or "no".

**2. NO:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "no". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them.

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Europe / European Union / constitutions / Jacques Chirac / referenda / defeat /  
coffins / suits / bureaucracy / foreign ministers / time for reflection*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. INFO SEARCH:** Talk to different partners and find out all you know about France. Get information on French people, history, culture and France's role in Europe. After you have finished gathering information, sit with your partner / group. Tell each other what you found out. Was this activity difficult? Did you learn new things about the world?

**5. "NON" OPINIONS:** In pairs/ groups, talk about how far you agree with these opinions.

- a. France has a habit of destroying good plans - first the invasion of Iraq and now the European Union constitution.
- b. It's wonderful the spirit of revolution is still alive in France.
- c. To say "non" to deeper European integration is a big step backwards.
- d. French voters were right to reject the constitution. It could never work.
- e. One day European voters will say "yes" to a European constitution.
- f. France is a small country in the world. Who cares what they say.
- g. A United States of Europe would be stronger than the United States of America. Saying "no" was wrong.
- h. French people want to remain French and not be European. There's nothing wrong with that.
- i. How about a European Union without France?
- j. English should become the official language of Europe, non?

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. France's government decided not to join the European Union. | T / F |
| b. French President Jacques Chirac was very happy.             | T / F |
| c. France is the fourth country to reject the constitution.    | T / F |
| d. French President Jacques Chirac said he intended to resign. | T / F |
| e. The future of the EU looks rosier than ever.                | T / F |
| f. Dutch voters are also likely to reject the EU constitution. | T / F |
| g. Nine countries have issued EU constitution postage stamps.  | T / F |
| h. The EU constitution is designed to reduce red tape.         | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| a. coming to terms with | efficient     |
| b. decisive             | go ahead      |
| c. streamlined          | determination |
| d. resolve              | red tape      |
| e. prevail              | accepting     |
| f. nail in the coffin   | gloomily      |
| g. spur on              | triumph       |
| h. stamp of approval    | motivate      |
| i. bureaucracy          | conclusive    |
| j. somberly             | mortal blow   |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| a. coming to                  | the way for ...        |
| b. designed to pave           | of approval            |
| c. crushing                   | bloc                   |
| d. fiery                      | day prevail            |
| e. the constitution would one | reduce the bureaucracy |
| f. another nail in            | suit                   |
| g. 25-country                 | the coffin             |
| h. follow                     | defeat                 |
| i. given it their stamp       | resolve                |
| j. drastically                | terms with             |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**WORD ORDER:** Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

### France rejects European constitution

**BNE:** A shell-shocked Europe is today with terms to coming the French rejection of the European Union constitution. The French people voted with a decisive "non" against the charter, which is designed to for the pave way a more streamlined Europe. President Jacques Chirac was out on a damage limitation exercise, the fact by deflated clearly that his country becomes the first to turn down deeper European integration. Despite the crushing defeat, the 72-year-old Mr. Chirac resolve his trademark displayed fiery and committed himself to pressing ahead with the ratification process. He ignored calls for his resignation and defiantly stated the constitution would one day prevail.

The future for the 25-country bloc is now uncertain. Another coffin for a nail in a federal Europe could arrive as early as Wednesday (June 1) if Holland also says "no" in its referendum. It is widely believed that France's will spur on rejection Dutch doubters to follow suit. The Dutch decision may be key to the future of the constitution, which needs the full approval from all 25 member nations to become established. So far, nine countries have their approval given stamp of it. Under the constitution, Europe would have a two-year revolving presidency and a European foreign minister. It is designed to drastically reduce the clogs that currently bureaucracy much decision making in Europe. U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair somberly called for "a time for reflection".

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'shell' and 'shock'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. WORD ORDER:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT EUROPE SURVEY:** In pairs / groups write down questions about Europe and the European Union.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- shell
- pave
- deflated
- crushing
- resolve
- prevail
- nail
- suit
- stamp
- revolving
- clogs
- reflection

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your initial reaction to the headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Are you interested in the workings of the European Union?
- d. What do you know about the EU constitution?
- e. Do you like French President Jacques Chirac?
- f. Do you think Jacques Chirac should step down?
- g. Does the French vote mean the end for the EU constitution?
- h. Do you think France is a major world power?
- i. Are you interested in French culture?
- j. What do you think of the character of French people?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. What did you think of this news?
- c. What do you know about Jacques Chirac?
- d. Do you think the French people were right to reject the constitution?
- e. Is the idea of a European constitution a good one?
- f. Could a future "United States of Europe" overtake the United States of America as the world's superpower?
- g. What do you think will happen to EU integration plans now?
- h. Should English become the official language for Europe?
- i. What do you think of the idea of Europe becoming a country and all member nations becoming states?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## SPEAKING

**WORLD INTEGRATION:** Imagine it is the year 2050. Incredible changes have happened in international relations. A world referendum is soon to take place on whether all countries in the world should become one giant nation with no separate countries.

Pair(s) / Group(s) A - Discuss and write down ideas in support of world integration.

Pair(s) / Group(s) B - Discuss and write down ideas against world integration.

A single world passport	
One world language	
No borders	
Freedom to live and work anywhere	
A world army	
A world currency	
No time zones – the same time all over the world.	
Other (think of a secret argument)	

After you have finished working with your pair / team partner(s) about world integration, discuss the issue with students from "the other side".



## LANGUAGE

### NO

Match the meanings and phrases on the left with the "no" words on the right.

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. A majority votes in the negative.  | a. a no-no                       |
| 2. A person who fails to turn up for something.   | b. a no-go area                  |
| 3. Something that you definitely mustn't do.  | c. no can do                     |
| 4. Anything that requires very little thought.  | d. a no-hoper                    |
| 5. An area between two opposing armies or countries in which no one can enter.                            | e. the noes have it              |
| 6. You must be joking... that can't be true.  | f. I won't take no for an answer |
| 7. An area that is barred to certain individuals or groups, like a military area or a teenager's bedroom. | g. a no-brainer                  |
| 8. You can only say yes to my request.  | h. no-man's land                 |
| 9. A useless person. Someone who has zero chance of success.  | i. a no-show                     |
| 10. I'm sorry but I cannot do what you are asking.  | j. no-nonsense                   |
| 11. not tolerating anything irrelevant; direct, to the point and practical.                               | k. no-frills                     |
| 12. Something that is very basic, with no inessential features.   | l. no way                        |

Try to use the "no" words to make questions. Share your questions with other students and ask them to your partner (s).

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### France rejects European constitution

**BNE:** A shell-shocked Europe is today \_\_\_\_\_ the French rejection of the European Union constitution. The French people voted with a decisive "non" against the charter, which is designed to \_\_\_\_\_ a more streamlined Europe. President Jacques Chirac was out on a \_\_\_\_\_, clearly deflated by the fact that his country becomes the first to turn down deeper European integration. Despite the crushing defeat, the 72-year-old Mr. Chirac displayed his \_\_\_\_\_ and committed himself to pressing ahead with the ratification process. He ignored calls for his resignation and defiantly stated the constitution \_\_\_\_\_.

The future for the 25-country bloc is now uncertain. Another \_\_\_\_\_ a federal Europe could arrive as early as Wednesday (June 1) if Holland also says "no" in its referendum. It is widely believed that France's rejection will \_\_\_\_\_ to follow suit. The Dutch decision may be key to the future of the constitution, which needs \_\_\_\_\_ all 25 member nations to become established. So far, nine countries have given it \_\_\_\_\_. Under the constitution, Europe would have a two-year revolving presidency and a European foreign minister. It is designed to drastically reduce the bureaucracy that currently \_\_\_\_\_ in Europe. U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair somberly called for "a time for reflection".

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on the French and Dutch referenda. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. WORLD:** Write your thoughts on how the world might become more integrated in the future. How would greater cooperation and closer ties affect your country? Show what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Compare your ideas.

**4. LETTER:** Write a letter to French President Jacques Chirac telling him what you think of the way his people voted. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did your classmates have similar thoughts?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. F      b. F      c. F      d. F      e. F      f. T      g. F      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. coming to terms with	accepting
b. decisive	conclusive
c. streamlined	efficient
d. resolve	determination
e. prevail	triumph
f. nail in the coffin	mortal blow
g. spur on	motivate
h. stamp of approval	go ahead
i. bureaucracy	red tape
j. somberly	gloomily

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. coming to	terms with
b. designed to pave	the way for ...
c. crushing	defeat
d. fiery	resolve
e. the constitution would one	day prevail
f. another nail in	the coffin
g. 25-country	bloc
h. follow	suit
i. given it their stamp	of approval
j. drastically	reduce the bureaucracy

### WORD ORDER:

#### France rejects European constitution

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### LANGUAGE - NO:

1. e    2. i    3. a    4. g    5. h    6. l    7. b    8. f    9. d    10. c    11. j    12. k