

Building Europe, building a new epic

Proposals for Europe in the context of the European Parliamentary elections

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February 2014

The construction of Europe in the post-war period was a truly epic effort that allowed lasting peace to be built. It followed centuries of armed conflicts, and the devastation of the two world wars. But this magic is no longer working, to say the very least....

I. The right to evaluate

1. The unification of the market that brought Europe together after the failure of the European Defence Community system is now defeating its purpose: it has become the stepping stone for liberal globalisation; and given that there is no strong political power in place, it has become the weak link in the chain of globalisation.
2. Given that the European Union is organised around this single objective, it has progressively lost its legitimacy in the eyes of European citizens: the unification of all European norms no longer satisfies the principle of minimum constraints. (Legitimate governance should demonstrate that it is working to achieve the objective of the common good by imposing as few constraints as possible on actors). The promised outcomes of a unified market in terms of growth are no longer perceptible, with the result that procedures no longer appear adapted to current challenges, causing citizens to feel that the on-going construction of the European Union is something that benefits only banks and large companies.
3. Declaring that the European Union will lead the knowledge economy fails to take the rising strength of higher education and development research in the key emerging countries into account.
4. The energy strategy for 2010 marks a significant step forward, but it fails to take the essential issue of 'grey energy' consumption into account. (This is the energy required for the production of goods and services; due to the lack of political cohesion, this innovative effort of the European Union has had no knock-on effect on the rest of the world).
5. Economy plays a disproportionately large role in the construction of Europe: the European Union resembles a single unified State in terms of market unification, rather than a State in all other ways.
6. Various objectives for achieving the economic unification of the European Union have been added to those of the Treaty of Lisbon, but they are disparate, and in no way help to create coherent structure.
7. The failure to understand that it is impossible to use one and the same currency to encourage the development of work and spare the consumption of fossil fuels and natural resources, means that the current economic tools have led the European Union to a situation whereby it is impossible to improve employment, balance external and internal trade, and protect the planet.
8. These weaknesses are all the more regrettable as the European Union is in many ways the lantern that can light the way forward for the rest of the planet: the attempt to reconcile economic efficiency, social cohesion and environmental protection, as well as the ability to peacefully reach

beyond national sovereignty and the habit of reconciling unity and diversity are all aspects of Europe that correspond to the needs of the world of today.

9. In the current Euro-scepticism-dominated political context, the European power that is needed to build a coherent Europe that would be capable of carrying greater weight in global affairs cannot be increased without making certain compromises, and without doing away with a certain number of constraints that result from market unification.

10. The European Union will only regain legitimacy in the eyes of citizens if it is able to overcome the deficit in “substantial democracy” by inventing new, collective ways of drafting policy. Over and above this right to take stock, we also need the right to invent another Europe, one that without throwing away the baby with the bathwater, will allow European citizens to reinvest Europe with meaning and a legitimacy that will again motivate and mobilise all European citizens, thus creating a new epic...

II- The duty to invent

A. Building the rationale for Europe

1. It will only be possible to begin a second stage of European construction by organising shared values around shared objectives. A common core tax and social system appears to be an objective that mobilises citizens. It is also vital to the economic and social cohesion of Europe, and is therefore something that the institutions should include in their new legislative programme that will begin as of 25th May.

2. The principle of responsibility should be included in the preamble of Constitutive Charter of the European Union, including a Charter of European Responsibilities.

3. Every 25 years an assembly where citizens’ debates from all geographical regions and all socio-professional categories should be established to update “European objectives”. These assemblies would not take the form of a “new European institution” that would duplicate or compete with existing ones, and would have no institutional powers; it would, however, be the means of expression for “the people of Europe”, who would be more aware of their shared destiny, and able to express the fundamentals of “living together”. European objectives would at all times be the means of updating the three on-going objectives of governance:

- The conditions for lasting peace and relations with other regions of the world
- Social cohesion
- The wellbeing of all, that respects the natural limits of our planet’s resources.

This can all be summarised as “the contribution of the European Union to global transition towards sustainable societies”.

B. New European governance

1. A new European convention

This convention should be action-oriented rather than aiming to carry out a new reform of the institutions; it would not be limited to modifying details, but would carry out an in-depth evaluation of European governance as a whole, based on the five general principles of governance: legitimacy, democracy and citizenship; relevance of programmes relative to the stated objectives; partnerships between actors, joint building of the common good, and connecting different levels of governance. This would therefore lead to:

2. Multi-level European governance based on the principle of active subsidiarity

2.1. The principle of active subsidiarity should be applied to markets. States and even regions should be allowed to determine their own rules in areas such as food security or public services' management, the governance of goods and services that are not commercialised outside this specific area, and that have no environmental impact beyond it. This principle should be incorporated into the TTIP negotiations, as it is also applicable to American markets.

2.2. The jurisdiction under which an economic sector falls should correspond to the level of its action. National jurisdiction should apply to national actions; European or international to European. This implies the extension of the European Court of Human Rights to the issue of responsibilities and beyond.

2.3. The principles of multi-level governance and subsidiarity should also be promoted within Member States. These principles are those that aim to create greatest unity and diversity. The European Union should therefore strongly recommend their implementation in all Member States, without however imposing them. This would help to create a more decentralised Europe and would provide greater encouragement to citizens' initiatives.

2.4. The principle of active subsidiarity is also applicable to currencies. The Euro represents important progress for the European Union, and is one of the means that allows it to play its part in the world. Nevertheless, imposing it as the sole currency weighs in an exclusive manner on the less competitive economies and makes them responsible for balancing their trade with other Member States; nor does it allow them to attempt to adjust in terms of "helplessness" and "unsatisfied needs". Maintaining the Euro and expanding the Eurozone could be coupled with the possibility for States and regions to develop national or regional currencies for their internal exchange that would meet the need for shared dedicated principles at European level. This would be based on experience and revised at regular intervals.

2.5. All European public policy needs to shift from open coordination to active subsidiarity. The European Union has developed methods of open coordination that are a rich learning ground and the first steps towards active subsidiarity. This has been accomplished alongside the construction of internal markets over which the Commission has exclusive decision-making powers. With a view to building the requisite homogeneity in terms of European integration needed to manage the internal market and other policies, these guidelines, based on collective experience, now need to become legally binding.

2.6. The principle of active subsidiarity should also apply to international trade undertaken by the European Union. Although, it is not immediately possible to impose production methods for those products imported into Europe that meet the same social and environmental norms as those implemented within the European Union, this objective should nevertheless be clearly stated as a medium term goal, and the outlines of verifiable guiding principles that apply to production and take the specificity of different countries into account will need to become binding and verifiable for all products imported into the European Union.

3. Responsible governance

3.1. The European Commission should be collegial and politically responsible. The President of the European Commission should be elected by the European Parliament by simple majority vote by the European Council on the basis of a double majority (that of the States and the peoples they represent), either simple or qualified. The initiative of the main European parties of presenting their candidates for the presidency of the Commission in the 2014 European elections is something that

strengthens the democratic legitimacy of the Commission. Where European politics are dominated by two major political parties, as is currently the case, the Parliament and the Commission should be presided by representatives of different parties. This should become a rule of thumb. The elected President of the Commission would freely designate the college of fifteen Commissioners; he or she would then be responsible for ensuring that the diversity of those selected reflects that of the Member States as well as of the political opinions of the European Union.

The Commission would collectively answer to the Parliament and the European Council that is the “second House”. The Commission could be voted out of office by a parliamentary vote of two thirds or by a vote by the European Council on the basis of a double qualified majority.

3.2. The scope of the European Court of Human Rights should be extended to that of a European Court of Rights and Responsibilities.

3.3. European procedures should be audited according to the principles of the European Charter of Responsibilities (such as the revision of the procedure for approving GMOs that is currently creating collectively irresponsible conditions)

4. Effective, living democracy

4.1. Pan-European panels of citizens, potentially drawn from three distinct levels (regional, national and European), would be created on all important European policy issues. The European commission is responsible for presenting proposals to the Parliament and the European Council; it would not be required to follow the conclusions of the panel, but rather to express its reasons for disagreement (examples of this are: the presentation of the position of the Swiss Federal Council on popular referenda, when the Federal Council is in disagreement with the outcomes of the referenda).

4.2. The Commission should support the creation of tools that will enable multilingual on-line dialogue via Internet as a public sphere action at European Union level. This would imply for example rebalancing the communication budget in favour of European public debate and the expression of citizens’ proposals to the detriment of top-down communication.

4.3. The Commission should introduce a simple unified system of Internet access in all fields of European policies, a multilingual data bank of experiences, and the formulation of citizens’ proposals: democracy implies that citizens have access to the best possible information and international experience on all subjects under consideration.

4.4. Concrete means of application of the principle of popular referenda initiatives as outlined in the Treaty of Lisbon should be trialled as soon as possible and in a sufficiently efficient manner to ensure that the tool retains all its vitality and democratic meaning.

4.5. The right to appeal to the European Court of Justice should be extended to all citizens, should they consider that European policies fail to conform to the objectives of the Union. This appeal can be made to cancel legislation, in the absence of legislation or as a form of direct action.

4.6. Drafting policies falls under the responsibility of the Commission; it should include the Committee of the Regions as of the initial stages, on the basis of geographical diversity, as well as the European Economic and Social Committee, and decision-making should be double, involving both the European Parliament and the European Council.

5. Strengthened economic governance, guided by the objectives of transition to sustainable societies

5.1. Democratic control of the European Central Bank should be increased. The specifics for doing

this are yet to be defined.

5.2. The European Union should develop its own tax system linked to the consumption of fossil fuel-based energy and non-renewable natural resources. This tax system would also apply to imported goods and services (it would be based on the concept of competitive neutrality).

5.3. The governance system that is applied to fossil fuel-based energy should be based on national, territorial and individual negotiable quotas that would create a European “Euro energy” system. The co-existence of the Euro and the energy euros would stimulate what needs to be developed - exchange between people and employment that would confer a sense of social usefulness on all European citizens, whilst simultaneously economising that which needs to be preserved; energy and natural resources.

5.4. States should be able to freely define the systems of governance applied to all goods, that by their very nature can not be considered as part of the market: those goods that are destroyed by sharing (major ecosystems or historical heritage for example); those goods that become divided by sharing, but that are not infinite in nature (fossil fuels, natural resources and the land, for example); those goods that multiply through sharing (knowledge and experience). States and Local Authorities should freely decide on the management of the Commons, that is to say those goods for which cooperative management including stable explicit rules are applicable. The European market can and should not be used by the European Union to counter this freedom.

C. The involvement of the European Union in building more legitimate, more democratic and efficient global governance

1. The European Union should speak as one in the international institutions

This implies that France and the United Kingdom give up their separate seats in the Security Council to enable the European Union to hold a single seat. The way in which positions are taken implies discussion at Parliamentary level, as well as within the Council and the Commission. The terms and conditions should be adapted to the relative importance of whatever subject is under discussion, and how urgent the position that needs to be taken: this would be the Council of Ministers in the case of the European Council, and the relevant Commission in the case of the Parliament.

2. The European Union should strongly advocate for renewed global governance, based on:

a) *Representation of different regions of the world (limited to a maximum of 20) responsible for defining the terms and conditions of shared regional positions.*

b) *The principle of active subsidiarity.*

3. *The European Union should actively promote the creation of a global legal framework of responsibility, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities; it should become the relevant place where political and economic actors exercise their responsibilities at international level, i.e. on those acts whose impacts reach beyond the borders of a given region.*

4. *The European Union should request a fresh round of negotiations with the World Trade Organisation to promote international trade based on sustainable production chains.*

It is these ambitious objectives alone that could reinstate Europe and our small nations in the global power game. If we fail to achieve this, they will become marginalised, and we shall be forced to sit and watch the world go by, greater victims than we currently are, of democratically

uncontrolled liberal globalisation.

This new ambition alone will enable Europe to become a model for the 21st century, as were those of the Italian Renaissance of the French age of Enlightenment!

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