

What kind of Europe should we build?

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Summary

Those who are not satisfied with today's Europe are demanding another plan for Europe, to be built by all who share their values and their main goals. To draw up this plan we shall attempt a synthesis of the numerous proposals and analyses available. We shall review the conditions for the emergence of a European citizenry, sole legitimate source of power. A new European political entity must define its values and objectives, which include creating a space for democracy and solidarity and being a part of the earth's eco-system. Geographic borders cannot be based on a poorly defined concept of "Europe" susceptible to change over time. It can only rely on values and above all on objectives that we assign it. The sharing of jurisdiction between this new entity and the states or even regions is not reduced to the "federation-confederation" alternative, but remains a very open choice. The institutions of a new European political entity must be consistent with the European democratic experience, shared by all Europeans and adopted by every European country. The steps in the process of building Europe, some of which are described here, must reflect "the desire to live together" that is so important to those who want to further European integration.

Summary in English

A working group on European integration met following the outcome of the French and Dutch referenda in the spring of 2005 and studied hundreds of documents, some of which are listed at the end of this text. Our work was also inspired by the reactions, thoughts and proposals of European activists, people "from the grassroots", who met regularly in the area of Lyon during the period October 2004-May 2005. We attended meetings, conferences and talks in various places on the draft treaty for a European constitution. The people we encountered, whether pro, con or undecided, were everyday citizens, open-minded democrats, seeking to understand and influence the evolution of European politics. We heard recriminations, reactions and advice, but never a scornful

word from any of the men and women, those "ordinary citizens" who make up "the European people" and who are seldom listened to by the political and media mainstream.

In the spring of 2006, the European Parliament and the European Council started talks on the institutional future of Europe: this does not leave us much time to develop our proposals. All those who are not satisfied with today's Europe, whether they voted no to oppose the way it is being built, or yes to preserve the Europe that they feel barely exists, yearn for another project and share values and principal goals.

Europe must show that it can be a means of responding to the major concerns of European citizens. We must not separate the debate on political Europe from the debate on social Europe, but show that it is possible, at the European level, to wage policies against unemployment and policies of economic revival much more efficiently than can be done at a single state level. We must show that the role of Europe is absolutely essential in matters of social and fiscal harmonisation and with regard to public services, and that it is a powerful counterweight to the globalisation imposed upon us, protecting us from the dictatorship of transnational corporations.

A constitution appears to be essential to establish the rule of law, because law without people is elitism, and people without law, populism. A constitution determines how and by whom law shall be written, enforced and judged, in the name of the people. This constitution must be elaborated, voted and modified by a people's majority. It must be readable and understandable by everyone. It must be short and leave every political choice open, and be social, based on solidarity and ultraliberal, provided it is compatible with its values.

People and Sovereignty

We often hear that there is no such thing as a European people. But a people can only come about if there is a democratic space: building a democratic Europe and a European people go side by side. For this purpose we must create a public space at the European level.

This means for us the emergence of a new people, European, but not exclusive of the peoples that form it, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Belgian, Austrian, themselves made up of numerous peoples, united through shared political sovereignty.

Many prominent journalists, "experts" and even political leaders share the idea that modernity involves relinquishing political power to other powers, economic, financial or of the media: the government by humans must make way for the governance of things, which of course is nothing but power by the few, a return to privilege. Others, or the same, only want to hear about a community of sovereign states, every state being free to organise its basic sovereignty. This two-storey construction (the national populace delegating the use of its power to its national government, which itself delegates it to the European level) is not democratic, because, without a proper space for debate, Europe

remains technocratic and anti-European, for the decisions are European but the debates remain national.

It seems to us that the power of the European people is the only alternative which meets the demand for democracy expressed by some European citizens in their votes of spring 2005. The construction of a new European entity, the setting up of a constitution and the development of this European people go side by side.

Values and Objectives

Values are lawful obligations, accepted and established. Objectives describe a model of society to be attained.

The values of the new European political entity must be, among other things, the respect of human dignity, equality, freedom, representative and participatory democracy, solidarity, secularity, the earth and the preservation of its ecosystems for future generations, and indeed social fairness, tolerance, rationality, peace.

The European Union is by far the leading economic entity in the world, but nevertheless still remains a political and diplomatic dwarf. The first objective is to unite and achieve a politically integrated Europe capable of being a counterweight to transnational corporations and the power of the United States.

The second objective is to make it a space for democracy where citizens, and they alone, decide their future. A significant number of citizens should be able to voice proposals when they feel it necessary and engage their fellow citizens in decision-making. Also, instead of a few having the privilege and freedom to access information, pluralist views and wide-ranging information should be accessible to all. The problem of languages, as vectors and tools of a political culture and common public space, is important: we must seek in Europe a common language independent of every hegemonic language in the world, in other words Esperanto or mutual understanding by families of languages.

The third objective of a new Europe is to make it an area of solidarity between individuals, able to rebuild a specifically European social model where the collective management of common goods and services should be granted a central place by harmonising the different social systems at a high level, and by harmonising fiscal policies.

The fourth objective is to respect the balance of nature to which mankind belongs.

Europe's Borders and Circles

Before defining Europe's borders, we must ask ourselves what do the words "Europe" or "European" mean, which could very simply allow us to define Europe. Today, whether we define it by geography, civilisation or a political plan, Europe is a poorly defined concept, variable in time, buffeted by plans to defend. This cannot be a serious criterion, the objective of belonging to a European entity. It seems that the borders of the European

political plan can therefore only depend on the values, and especially on the objectives, that we assign to it.

The objective of matching the hegemony of the United States makes certain countries, which, for their own various reasons, feel very close to one another and very often align themselves along political lines, reflect on belonging to this Europe. Besides, the objectives of solidarity and ecological responsibility promote the integration of countries having high social and environmental standards. Finally, building a democratic Europe requires stable geographical borders, since democracy can only unfold in a defined and controlled space.

There seems to be only three options for creating a political Europe: transforming the entire present or future European Union, creating limited small groups through consolidated cooperation, creating a single core within the transformed European Union. Transforming the present European Union into a political Europe seems next to impossible over the next ten to twenty years. Developing several groups of consolidated cooperation would lead to an unstable space, an undemocratic space being created, which would foster incoherent policies. The third option calls for building a new political entity from a limited number of EU countries with the same currency, ie the founding member countries. This is, in our opinion, the best option for creating the embryo of a democratic political Europe.

Sharing Different Competencies, Subsidiarity

This section deals with defining how to distribute the competencies and responsibilities between this new entity and the states. If everyone appears to be in agreement with respect to rejecting the centralised European state with all the powers, like the Confederation of Sovereign States where every single decision requires consent from every single member state, the term European Federation includes a vast range of systems, according to the extent of exclusive European or national competencies.

The exclusive competencies of the new European entity could be foreign policy and international representation, European defence, economic, monetary, trade policy, and finally European and international transportation.

The Institutions

The institutions of a new political European entity must correspond to the European democratic experience, shared by all Europeans and implemented everywhere in Europe, except within the present European Union:

- *A Parliament which directly represents the citizens: it initiates legislation and has final vote on legislation, budget; it can censure the executive.*
- *An upper Chamber which represents these same citizens right across territorial entities, equivalent to the French Senate or the German Bundestag: in European democracies, the members of the upper chamber are generally elected by indirect*

suffrage, by the directly elected representatives of the citizens. This principle must be retained at the European level in order that a strong link be kept between its members and the citizens. This upper Chamber could therefore be elected by the national Parliaments, the regional Parliaments or by both, or even only representing the states.

- *European mandates must be exclusive between them and from all other responsibilities: neither multiple responsibilities nor functions are permissible. Mandates are renewed only once.*
- *A President: "veteran" of this political Europe or in charge of the executive, he could be elected by the Parliament or by direct universal suffrage.*
- *A government, executive of the new European political entity, presided over by either a prime minister elected by parliamentary majority and confirmed by this single Parliament, or by a President elected by the citizens or the Parliament, without a prime minister.*
- *A Court of justice and a tribunal, whose power must be legitimate, controlled and sanctioned by the will of the people, which is not the case in the present European Union.*

The Constituent Process

A new European entity can only happen from the "desire to live together" and not from forcibly imposing a federal state on constrained people in the way that ancient empires or the European Union of these last decades have done. They are all citizens of Europe, not a learned assembly comprised of 105 "personalities" bound together by the Agreement, who must debate.

A difficult question is the geographical perimeter of this debate: does it have to take place throughout the European Union, or even integrating future members, or within member states that are most in favour of a more forced political integration? The first solution seems moot because it is inconceivable that a plan be finalised by a group of countries to which some of them are mostly hostile or indifferent. The second solution involves defining the people who are most in favour of political integration, after debate at the European level.

This constituent assembly must have as its one and only objective the drawing up of the constitutional project. It will take into account the history of Europe, the experience of the different countries and the existing proposals. The constitutional project will then be submitted to the people for approval.

Conclusion

The objective of this text is to ask the questions, find solutions and adequately advance a European citizenship. Analyses and proposals must be discussed, refuted, in-depth, completed so as to integrate different approaches, and especially the different national

political cultures, in the best way possible since no one can today claim to ask all the (right) questions or have the right answer.