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pour le Progrès de l'Homme
fph

reinventing

Europe's future

18 proposals for debate

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English version

1.1. European governance: looking to the future

multi-level European governance

Most of the problems of our time cannot be handled at a single level of governance. Society's needs are met not by a distribution of exclusive competencies to each level, but through shared competencies. Hence the importance of the concept of multi-level governance and the interest of the Committee of the Regions' recent White Paper to promote it (www.cor.europa.eu). It amounts to a Copernican revolution, one that will lead to a systematic reform of relations between the European Union, Member States, regions, and cities. It calls for new principles, new approaches, and a new culture. The Parliament can play a role in pushing them forward.

revitalized procedures

European procedures have skidded off course. The legitimate aspiration for fair competition and the fear of clientelism have produced unintended consequences with procedures which do not allow for long term learning processes. This is particularly the case in the realm of international cooperation (see the assessement of the European cooperation on www.ue-acp.org). The European Commission's capacity for initiative has shrunk, the respect for procedures has thwarted the very goal of the policies. The "new public management" adopted by the EU bureaucracy has discouraged Europe's civil servants from risk-taking and long-term action. The Commission was once a task force of European activists. This is no longer the case. The Parliament must help it get back on the track.

giving priority to territorial policies

If it wants to be something more than a *tête-à-tête* between Member States and European institutions, European governance must begin with the most basic level of social, economic, and ecological organization: territories. In modern society, territories are not simply a level of administration, but a system of relationships.

The Commission's recent Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion shows that Europe can renew its governance by starting from the territorial level (www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy).Fabrizio Barca's report to the Directorate General for Regional Policy confirms this opinion (www.ec.europa.eu).

1.2. a Europe built with and by its citizens

The gap between European institutions and Europe's citizens will not be filled simply by "explaining" Europe and all the benefits citizens get from it. Citizens must be a part of Europe's all major debates. "Participatory democracy" and online debates are not a threat to representative democracy. On the contrary, they offer it an opportunity to renew itself. The European Parliament has a unique role to play in promoting participatory democracy and providing it with specific tools. Here are three examples.

generalizing European citizens' panels

Citizens' panels, which were first successfully used to address local problems, should be used at the European level. A prototype can be found in the panel that has considered the future of rural areas (www.citizenspanel.eu). It consists of two levels: that of European regions, to reflect the diversity of their situations, and that of the Union. The interest of these panels highly depends on the way they are considered by the European Parliament. Their generalization will improve their methodology through a learning process.

permanent forums for online debate

Internet offers the means for organizing multilingual forums on European policies. Such a public sphere is currently lacking. The sheer fact that information circulates freely does not guarantee that debates will be substantive: in order to be useful, a debate must be well informed, relying on a solid documentary basis, and moderated in a way that general conclusions can be drawn from it. Forums are a new European public good. The example mentioned above of the debate on European cooperation policy (www.ue-acp.org) could serve as a prototype.

a Citizens' Forum on Europe

Many citizens have proposals to make about the European Union. The political world can only make use of them if they are synthesized and put together on a shared documentary site. The website www.challengeforeurope.eu is a prototype. The European Parliament could convene an annual meeting in which citizens' proposals could be compared, debated, and synthesized, placing a range of ideas at the Parliament's disposal.

1.3. a responsible Europe

the adoption of a European Declaration of Human Responsibilities

The essence of the European model is the idea of social contract. Social contract means the recognition of mutual responsibilities. Responsibilities are the hidden side of rights: there are no effective rights, be they social, environmental, or cultural, unless there are actors who feel responsible for enforcing them. The European conception of citizenship does not consist of accumulating rights without corresponding obligations, but of fairly balancing, for each citizen, rights and responsibilities. This is also true at a global scale. The admirable legal structure created by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one-sided if the rights it proclaims are not legally binding on states; nor can it work if governments are only accountable to their electors and companies to their shareholders, despite the fact that their decisions have a much wider impact. The international community needs a third pillar, in addition to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: a Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities. To achieve this, one world region must take the initiative. Europe is clearly best placed to do so. In the past, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would have been unimaginable without the historical precedents of the American and then the French declarations of the late 18th century.

The adoption of a European Declaration of Human Responsibilities could be one of the great legislative accomplishments of the current Parliament.

a responsible European University

The ERASMUS program and the standardization of university education, thanks to the Bologna Process, must be counted among Europe's most important achievements. But neither defines the contents or the goals of a twenty-first-century university. The only real standard of excellence for higher education should be whether universities train the elites that tomorrow's world will need: elites capable of managing a complex world, of communicating with different sectors of society, and of prioritizing their actions in a way that reflects society's genuine needs. The Parliament is in a position to lay the foundations of a responsible and civic-minded European university. Specific proposals already exist (www.orus-int.org).

a responsible and civic-minded European science

In a world transformed by science and technology, democracy becomes an empty word if scientific and technological choices are not subject to democratic debate and citizens' oversight. Yet this is precisely what is happening. Europe is well positioned to establish a scientific culture and political procedures that could reintegrate science and technology into democratic processes. Parliament should launch a public debate on these issues. The Civic Science Foundation suggests three topics of particular interest: increasing the research capabilities and expertise of civil society; promoting freedom of speech and protecting whistle-blowers; and creating democratic procedures for scientific and technological decision-making (www.sciencescitoyennes.org).

The objections expressed by many Europeans towards the Constitutional Treaty revealed their wariness toward a Europe based exclusively on free trade. The very goal of the European integration process has never been economic development; it was peace. Economic unification was only a means to an end. Every aspect of our economy – its foundations, its tools, its actors, its regulatory principles – must be revisited if we are to create a truly sustainable society. In the eyes of the world, Europe offers the best example of a mixed economy, in which the market economy and public regulations balance and complement one another. It thus has a historic role to play in reinventing the economy. The Parliament's vocation should be to pave the way. Here are five specific paths it could take:

2.1. from economy to oeconomy

Material development is a means, not an end in itself. With its "climate-energy package," the European Union has sought to show the way to a sustainable society in which general well-being would not be attained at the expense of planetary equilibriums. But the path leading to real change has not yet been found, neither in Europe nor in the rest of the world. Speaking of *oeconomy* rather than economy reminds us of the original sense of the word: « to manage wisely our household », the household being today our planet. That is what production and exchange are about. The definition and guidelines of 21st century economy should therefore be: oeconomy is a branch of governance; its goal is to create actors, institutional frameworks, processes, and rules that seek to organize the production, distribution, and usage of goods and services and to guarantee humanity maximum well-being by using the best in technological capabilities and human creativity; at the same time, it strives to preserve and enrich the biosphere and to preserve the interests, rights, and initiative of future generations in conditions of responsibility and equity upon which all can agree. The Initiative for Rethinking the Economy (IRE – www.i-r-e.org) and the *Essay on Oeconomy* (www.eclm.fr) offer concrete proposals for enforcing these guidelines.

2.2. putting territories and global value chains at the heart of the economy

Ever since the 19th century large companies and states have been the pivotal economic actors. As primary force and principle beneficiaries of globalization, large companies structure global value chains. States, on the other hand, redistribute wealth and establish "horizontal" regulation frameworks for economic activities. Yet a sustainable society cannot be built by relying on these two actors alone: companies want to expand indefinitely, while states have a hard time reconciling competing economic, social, and environmental interests. Hence the need for a new approach, focused on weaving together territories and global value chains. Territories must be conceived as webs of relationships, embedded in a global system, as places where intangible capital is accumulated, and as the relevant level to combine social, economic, and environmental interests. Sustainable global value chains, in which a company is only one actor among many others, are the right level for reconciling society's needs with the preservation of a resource-limited and ecologically fragile planet. The European Union is well positioned to promote these new ways of conceiving and regulating production and trade.

2.3. expanding the concept of currency to promote a sustainable society

Another way to reconcile society's needs with preserving the planet is to reconsider the nature and purpose of currency. Two promising ideas merit consideration: regional currencies and multi-dimensional currencies. Regional currencies allow for the organization of trade within a community and, in the process, reinforce social bonds that have been weakened by recent trends. Negotiable energy quotas could become a full-fledged currency, making it possible to use different units of account for measuring energy and labor. This is vital since energy is a scarce resource that we must learn to use less of, whereas labor is the basis of social cohesion. In all these domains, Parliament could play a major role, whether by actively supporting innovations, by disseminating their results, or by promoting a vast public debate on the perspectives that these alternatives open.

2.4. placing Services of General Interest at the heart of the European project

The Lisbon Treaty's supplementary protocol recognizes the legitimacy of Services of General Interest (SGI) and the impossibility of reducing everything to market forces. On this basis, drawing on the diversity of national traditions, the formulation of a robust European doctrine of SGI is possible. It would have a profound impact on the rest of the world. In light of the new role given to it by the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament could host the kind of multi-actor exchanges needed to develop such a doctrine. The creation of a Parliamentary Intergroup on services of general interest would send a powerful political message. A multilingual glossary has already made it possible to compare and understand different national approaches and to highlight the core features of such a doctrine (www.eurosig.eu).

2.5. a European statute for a responsible company

The European Union considers itself a leader in the field of corporate social and environmental responsibility. But in a climate of intense international competition, a deep gap exists between the concern for economic efficiency, which is necessary for a company's survival, and social and environmental concerns. This is because company statutes make satisfying shareholders a company's compelling goal. The Parliament could initiate a reflection on the creation of new company statutes, acknowledging that companies should become an essential part of sustainable global value chains and that they comprise multiple stakeholders: shareholders of course, but also employees, clients, sub-contractors, suppliers, and the territories where they are based. The European directive that defines the statute of a "European company" goes in the right direction, but the importance of responsibility must be more strongly affirmed, and European companies must be encouraged to adopt this statute.

Even though disagreements among Member States and the Commission's limited role in international relations (except for commercial issues) undermine the European Union's influence on the world stage, the EU still remains, in terms of wealth produced and foreign trade, the most important actor of the global system. Along with this role come responsibilities. Here are four ways for Europe to play a positive role in the emergence of a peaceful and united global community with citizens playing an active role.

3.1. developing a society-to-society dialogue between different regions of the world

Relations between societies used to mean relations between neighboring "villages" : each "village" could choose to cooperate or fight but, at the end of the day, everyone would eventually go home. Today, relations between societies are akin to those between roommates who live in the same apartment and share its facilities. Diplomatic and commercial relations are no longer sufficient to regulate the irreversible interdependencies that bind together all parts of the globe. Societies must be a part of these regulations. If they are to transcend nationalism and defensive identity politics that grow in reaction to the global interdependency, societies must be brought to communicate with one another through citizens' initiatives. They must realize that in spite of their differences, they are facing common challenges. This implies new processes such as the China-Europa Forum (www.china-europa-forum.net). In its 2009 budget the European Parliament approved a credit line to show its support for this kind of initiatives. The new Parliament should confirm this support. The dialogue launched between China and Europe could be extended to other regions of the world. As long as they are based on rigorous methods, these inter-society dialogues are an essential complement to inter-regional Parliamentary Assemblies.

3.2. building a new international monetary and financial system by linking major world regions

The recent financial crisis proves that the world needs a new financial system, one that is more stable and better able to meet our society's needs. But on what basis should it be established? When the first Bretton Woods conference was held, the United States accounted for half of the world's GDP; today, it accounts for only a quarter. The shift to a multilateral system is unavoidable. Drawing on its own experience in creating a monetary zone, Europe could play a role in establishing a new monetary and financial framework, founded on multilateral cooperation rather than on the domination of a single currency. The above mentioned Initiative for Rethinking the Economy has launched a series of proposals that go beyond the G20 agenda (www.i-r-e.org). Because it is less constrained than the Commission by the positions of Member States, the Parliament could initiate a proposal for a new monetary and financial order.

3.3. proposing a new social contract between Europe and Africa

Most African countries have now been independent for about fifty years. Their independence has often been more theoretical than real. The newly independent states' insistence on their sovereignty masks the fact that Africa, because of its financial dependency, is fundamentally governed from outside and expected to obey international rules (notably concerning governance) established for it but without it. The European Union, represented by the Parliament, would honor itself by seizing the opportunity of the 50th anniversary of Africa's independences to support the African society – a society full of energy in spite of its poverty and recurrent crises – in elaborating a truly African perspective on governance, conceived and enforced by Africans themselves. Such a new perspective could emerge, with active participation from all stakeholders, through a conference organized by the Alliance for Rebuilding Governance in Africa (www.afrique-gouvernance.net). Respected by public authorities yet independent, the Alliance is the suitable framework for such a project.

3.4. promoting a Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly

The Union for the Mediterranean, the Euro-Mediterranean Platform, neighborhood policies, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly: institutional forums for relations between the northern and southern Mediterranean are not lacking. But where are the citizens in all this? How do they learn to know each other? How can they contribute to constructing a Mediterranean community of peoples? The European Parliament could give a decisive push to the Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly that is beginning to be sketched out (www.acimedit.net).

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