

RESOLUTION “A UNITED EUROPE – NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER”

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For the pro-European forces the time is ripe to stand up, to commit to the successful project of Europe and to fight for it. Many reform steps paved the way to the European Union of today. Remarkable progress has been made concerning the Union’s scope of activities, the design of decision making and the number of its member states. The EU was and still is a guarantee for peace and - too often unacknowledged - for the welfare of its citizens. But the competences and structures of the European Union are incomplete and do not cope with existing challenges and expectations.

Six months before the next European election the process of uniting Europe is seriously in danger. The simultaneous deepening and widening of the Union requires an ongoing process of constitutionalisation. The failure of the constitutional treaty in 2005 and the economic and social crisis that followed the financial crash in 2008 have reduced confidence and questioned trust in the European project. For the first time in its history a member state is about to leave the European Union. Nationalist demagogic, populist and Eurosceptic political parties gain support all over the Union, and in some member states the common values and the rule of law are under attack. As a result the Union has partly lost the support of its citizens. Therefore there is an urgent need for reform in many respects.

The electoral campaign as a catalyst for the reform debate

The Union of European Federalists welcomes the new discussion about the future of Europe as initiated by the Commission’s white paper and by the remarkable speeches in 2017 of Commission President Jean Claude Juncker and the President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron which included many fresh ideas and concrete reform proposals. The campaign for the European election in May 2019 must be used to clearly show the advantages and the need to act together in a united Europe. It offers the chance to discuss the future of Europe and to push for necessary reforms.

Citizens should have the possibility to decide with their vote on the composition of the European Parliament and at the same time on the EU’s top position but, above all, they must be asked to decide with their vote which future for the EU do they want: whether based on a more intergovernmental method, as nationalists ask, or if the European Union has to become more effective and closer to the citizens by acquiring new own resources and powers in order to deliver stronger European policies especially in the economic and migration fields. Therefore the pro-European political parties have to show to the citizens their common will to strengthen the EU and to effectively promote their European programmes. Moreover they have to present their candidates for the president of the European Commission as *Spitzenkandidaten* and to decide on the procedure to elect one of the lead candidates as President of the Commission and on the political guidelines for reforms he or she has to represent before the European elections. After the European election and before the decision of the European Council they should find an agreement on the next President and commit to that agreement. For future European elections the European character of the elections has to be strengthened by the introduction of transnational lists.

Necessary reforms

Ever since it has been founded the Union of European Federalists is strongly committed to the establishment of a federal European Union. The aim is not a centralized super-state, but a federation

in which states, regions, municipalities and citizens work trustfully together. The Union has limited but strong powers and effective, democratically legitimised institutions. More responsibility is urgently needed for the European level especially in the following fields:

- According to the given structures and open borders in the EU – which we definitely want to keep - policies of immigration and asylum can only be tackled at the European level. We need convincing concepts and instruments to introduce and implement a coherent and effective immigration and asylum policy at the European level based on solidarity, fair sharing of responsibility and clear respect for human rights. The Dublin regulations must be replaced by a European Agency for Asylum which examines demands and grants asylum in the name of all EU member states. Hence the creation of a European refugee status and legal ways for economic migrations have to be established. Moreover we need a system that really works to manage the external borders of the Union;
- Economic and Monetary Union has to be strengthened. There is a need for a Treasury with its own fiscal capacity. The European Stability Mechanism has to be transformed into a European Monetary Fund in order to contribute to the financial stability of the Eurozone. A substantial Eurozone budget has to be established to support competitiveness and convergence by financing new investments in innovation and human capital: this will substitute for national spending and fill the huge current investment gap. Moreover a social instrument for euro area member states in trouble is necessary, and it could take the form of a European Unemployment Stabilization Fund. Such a supplementary budget will grow over time as an instrument capable of contributing to macro-economic stabilisation;
- The capability of the European Union to act in foreign and security policy has to be strengthened. The relationships with the United States, Russia and Turkey are difficult and unpredictable. The European Union is asked to promote, protect and defend the interests of its member states. Separately, EU member states have well-known capacities in world affairs, which they should pool into a common diplomatic power to good effect. If they decide to act together by combining their international experience to the benefit of Europe's common good, the Union can exploit a wide range of instruments and considerable resources to develop its outstanding role in civilian conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilisation. The Commission should take over responsibilities to engage in civil protection, rescue and aid in international natural disasters. But for being more effective, majority voting has to be introduced in important fields of foreign and security policy and the capacity to act has to be strengthened. Current treaties provide for this as they are;
- To fulfil its obligations the European Union needs fully fledged financial means. For the period 2021-2028 the ceiling of the EU budget of 1,23 % of the gross national income should be exploited. Based on a treaty amendment or by activating the general "passerelle clause", the European Council should endow European Union with the right to raise taxes in limited fields, like corporate tax for multinational companies, digital products, financial transactions, carbon dioxide or plastic;
- Concerning the institutions and the decision-making process the most needed and important reform is the introduction of qualified majority voting as the general principle. For sensitive questions there could be a threshold of three quarters or more, but unanimity should only be necessary in very limited critical and specific cases. Due to the fact that the

Parliament and the Council of ministers form the legislative branch, the European Council should fulfil high level representative tasks and refrain from interfering with the day to day policy making. The number of Commissioners should be reduced as foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty;

- We do not need new institutions like a Parliament for the euro-area, since the euro is the common currency of the Union. Democratic legitimacy in the institutional system governing the Economic and Monetary Union must be secured by the general rule that the European Parliament decides on all matters of the Economic and Monetary Union, including a possible new budget for the euro area; but, at the same time, a new voting rule within the European Parliament must be set up, giving voting right on matters of the euro area exclusively to those Members of the European Parliament who have been elected in the member states belonging to the Economic and Monetary Union or on an EU-wide transnational list;
- Most of the proposals above can be realised within the existing treaties, but some need a treaty change. The Union of European Federalists asks for both: improvements which can be realized in the framework of the existing treaties should be immediately implemented; others requiring treaty reforms or a new treaty to be prepared by a Convention implying contributions of the European Parliament, member states, regions, local authorities and representatives of civil society and citizens.

The reform process

During the election campaign 2018-2019 necessary changes to the future constituent process of the EU have to be prepared, explained and promoted. If all member states' governments or parliaments do not prove to be ready to take the qualitative step towards a federal union, those who are prepared to do so should form a "coalition of the willing". Under clear conditions the UEF supports the establishment of different levels of integration inside the EU, thus allowing the closely integrated core to show the way forward for the Union as a whole. This implies that those member states willing to give birth to a fiscal/economic/political Union must be ready to go beyond the current treaties, even without the consent of the other partners, as it was in the past for the euro or the fiscal compact and ESM. But those movements should not disrupt the framework of the European Union or lead to a "Europe à la carte" and it must be always open for others to join.

The relationship between the citizens and the European Union needs to be improved. More democratic processes are of uttermost importance for the future of the Union. A possible innovation to be extended both in time and scope could be the concept of citizens' consultations. In many town hall meetings all over the Union women and men are asked to articulate their ideas on the future and Europe. However, before this concept is transferred into the political reform process, strong evidence is needed that they can have a real impact in the citizens' adhesion to the European perspective and the decision-making process.

We request the European Parliament to take the initiative and trigger an ambitious constitutional reform. This could take the form of a dedicated Convention working on the basis of a draft presented by the European Parliament, and with contributions from member states, regions, local authorities and other representatives of civil society and citizens.

The Union of European Federalists is prepared to accompany and to contribute actively to the reform process of the European Union.