

# EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: FULL STEAM AHEAD!

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The participants of our 2013 European Steering Committee underline the need to address three political challenges in the perspective of the May 2014 meeting, via a final declaration entitled: "European elections: full steam ahead!"

This Tribune has been published in the European media by the following outlets: Euractiv.com (EU), Le Figaro (France), Handelsblatt (Germany), La Libre Belgique (Belgium), Publico (Portugal), la Razon (Spain), La Repubblica (Italy), Le Temps (Switzerland) and To Vima (Greece).

The European elections of 22 to 25 May 2014 are an event whose importance is in strict proportion to the multifaceted crisis currently affecting the construction of Europe. This great democratic gathering must prompt us to address three complementary political challenges by formulating proposals designed to underscore the significance of the European Union (EU), to complete the euro area and to fuel an open and determined political debate.

## 1. Making "Greater Europe" positive again

The excessive amount of attention recently drawn by the crisis in the euro area must not allow us to forget that the upcoming European elections concern "Greater Europe" (i.e. the 28-strong European Union). That is the scale on which our countries and our fellow citizens, united in their diversity and now reconciled, are called upon to write the new chapters in their Community venture.

"Greater Europe" is the proper scale today, more than it has ever been in the past, for reaffirming the EU's increasing role in a globalised world, a role most of its peoples wish to bolster in the knowledge that strength lies in unity. The EU has already adopted enlargement and external aid policies, which are likely to become topics for debate during the imminent election campaign. The same applies to trade policy, at a time when transatlantic negotiations are going ahead, Europe is making an effort to better regulate "unbridled finance", regulations which need to be expanded, and the EU is dithering over migration. Also, the European peoples' diplomatic and military commitment must be strengthened, in their near neighbourhood at the very least, even on the basis of enhanced cooperations.

"Greater Europe" is also the proper scale for pursuing the efforts undertaken in the sphere of the climate

and protection of the environment, and for encouraging the energy transition process. This is the core significance of the "European energy community" project that we are promoting in an effort to respond to the priority ambitions of the EU's citizens and member states (i.e. making our industry competitive and ensuring security of supply, environmental protection and so on).

And lastly, "Greater Europe" is the single market: which can be deepened further still in the spheres of the service industry, the digital economy and major infrastructures, in order to foster more growth and employment; one which must allow workers' freedom of movement to become more fluid and better structured (especially with regard posting); and one which must become the subject of greater social and fiscal harmonisation in order to allay the tension between east and west, or between the centre and the periphery.

## 2. Completing the Economy and Monetary Union

The crisis has highlighted the faults caused by the imbalance between monetary union and economic union, and it is now causing the euro area to look increasingly like a political core for increased integration based on specific rights and duties in terms of discipline and of solidarity.

Thus it is necessary first and foremost to pursue the actions of solidarity and control already which have already begun including the establishment of a fully-fledged "banking union" based on monitoring banks at the European level, getting financial players to make a contribution to their own bailout, and reducing the differences in interest rates that businesses and households have to pay; improved European coordination in the sphere of member states' economic and social policies, in order to prevent the excesses and risks that threaten the very functioning of the monetary union,

through the adoption of financial incentives for member states that undertake reforms; the creation of anticyclical insurance mechanisms of different kinds among the euro area's member states; and on partially mutualising the national debt issue in view of the lingering threat of a systemic crisis...

Completing the economic and monetary union (EMU) also means imparting a specific social dimension to that union, by involving the social partners, for instance in an effort to better organise the free movement of workers or to get Europe to take responsibility for the victims of structural adjustment (with young people heading the list). It also means giving the EMU the specific tools it needs to support growth through massive investment, not only to speed up the continent's emergence from the current and extremely serious phase of social and economic recession that is undermining its cohesion and its dynamism, but also to create the conditions for an environmentally responsible human development.

And lastly, it is necessary to complete the governance of the euro area by once again convening regular "euro area summits", by giving the Eurogroup a full-time chairman, and by allowing national and European parliamentarians to better exercise their democratic monitoring powers both in Brussels and in the various national capitals.

### 3. Promoting the European construction on the basis of clear alternatives

It is only by formulating a dual, positive agenda at the EU and euro area levels, that it will be possible to imbue the election campaign with its full significance as it develops on two complementary registers.

First of all, we need to reaffirm our confidence in the European construction by optimising its basic *acquis*, such as for instance the spirit of reconciliation and the principle of freedom of movement. Extremist parties are going to attempt to turn the upcoming elections into a kind of referendum for or against the EU or the euro, taking advantage of the deterioration of its image caused by the recession and its handling. We must tirelessly restate the case for Europe, with determination and with an open mind, on the basis of a broad vision of the geopolitical threats and opportunities that it is having to address.

The upcoming European elections must also trigger a clear political debate between the various different approaches to the EU's functioning, its policies and its future. There is a need to highlight the differences between the conservatives, the liberals, the social democrats, the greens, the radical left and the other political forces, and thus to allow the electorate to distinguish between their different agendas for the EU between now and 2020.

In this connection, we welcome the fact that the European political forces are in the process of designating their candidates to the post of President of the Commission, which will better personalise the issues in the debate and the election. It is also thanks to the fact that European voters will be able to put faces to some of the leading orientations of the European construction as well as to the divides underlying the EU's political life, so that they will be able to fully grasp the significance of the major democratic deadline looming in the spring of next year, in France as in the rest of Europe.

Once more unto the polls, dear fellow citizens, once more!

#### WHAT POLITICAL BALANCE OF POWER IN THE NEXT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?

Yves Bertoncini and Valentin Kreilinger, *Policy Paper No 102, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute*, November 2013

#### EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: LESS ABSTENTION, MORE POPULISM?

Yves Bertoncini, *Tribune, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute*, November 2013

#### WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS OF 2014?

Sofia Fernandes, *Synthesis, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute*, November 2013

#### EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: THE DEBATE IS NOW!

Podcast of the conference of the 16 of September 2013, *Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute*, Eurocity and Europartenaire, September 2013

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