

A democratic vision: `unity in diversity`

1. Why this vision

The European project today is lacking in purpose and direction. As the failure of the French and Dutch referenda on the constitution illustrate, there is a disconnection between the people and their leaders. We believe that citizens are concerned about recent events that have occurred in the EU in the last year and a half. The proposed Constitution, misinterpreted as something more than it actually is, and the enlargement to ten member states of Central and Eastern Europe, were not effectively communicated to citizens.

This increase in diversity within the European Union is being complicated by global economic competition, migration, and the breakdown of traditional communities. In order for this to be an asset and not a liability for the EU, its member states must define a vision that can reconcile this increased diversity with its long term goals to allow it to become strength for the Union.

The EU does have motto, "Unity in diversity" (In varietate concordia), which was officially proclaimed on the 4th May 2000 in the European Parliament. It was then even taken up by the European constitution. Yet we believe that this motto remains an empty promise because nobody has seriously tried to put it in practice. Europe today could be described as "Disunity in diversity"

The need for Unity in Diversity is supported by the following four reasons. First, even though being an implicit and explicit ideal of the European project, it has not been realised yet. Secondly, diversity can only be secured through consolidation of existing Europe by guaranteeing welfare and prosperity as already stated in the Treaty of Rome. Thirdly, unity in diversity allows for flexibility which is urgently needed after Enlargement. Having achieved this, unity finally turns from a liability into an asset.

1. Institutional structure based on a federal model

At present the EU is struggling over a proposed constitution that reinforces existing ideas and puts together past treaties and fundamental issues. Some elements of this constitution serve a good basis as those set out in Section 2. However, in order to preserve unity and diversity, additional steps towards a federal Europe are needed. Federalism as a form of governance brings about a shift of the locus of the service provision to the level of the unities composing the federation, leaving the centre with coordinative functions. Contrary to the fears of many critics, this federal Europe would not entail a centralised Brussels-based superstate that would do away with national sovereignty. The principle of subsidiarity, whereby decisions are taken at the most effective level, will simultaneously preserve diversity and achieve the appropriate degree of unity within the European Union. In addition, a federal governance structure provides for a government closer to the citizen, thereby fostering ownership and inclusion.

2. Common policies to reflect unity in diversity

a) Common security and defence policies

The European Union is a club of diverse nation states who, at the same time, adhere to common unifying principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Globalisation illustrates that Westphalian inspired nation-state foreign policy frameworks are no longer fully effective. The pursuit of diversity is only possible once security and peace have been achieved. As a unified defence policy would ensure peace and security, a unified foreign policy based on shared European values could provide its citizens with a sense of belonging to

the Union. On the one hand, the European vision of unity in diversity should inform a value-based foreign policy and determine the external actions of the Union. For example, while the Scandinavian countries heavily identify with their traditional role peace-keepers in many conflict areas, countries such as Switzerland and Ireland unite behind the idea of neutrality. On the other hand, a common Defence policy ensures freedom, security and the capacity to respond to many challenges to diversity.

b) Immigration and integration:

Europe is a rich place, full of opportunities for many people from beyond its borders. Europe should be as an open place for i) immigrants able to support themselves without requiring welfare support and ii) asylum seekers with a valid reason. Liberal and progressive immigration policies would not only increase diversity within the Union but have the useful effect of tackling its increasing demographic problems. The integration of self-sufficient immigrants into Europe's communities would have a unifying effect on developing social communities and contribute to the emerging cosmopolitan Europe. Giving greater asylum to political refugees would ensure that Europe continues to live up to its responsibilities by showing solidarity with people affected by conflict situations.

c) Migration

The EU must live up to commitment to the free movement of persons (as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty), resulting in the abolition of transitory periods for Eastern European workers. Those 3 older member states who have successfully opened up their labour markets to citizens of the newer members – Ireland, the UK and Sweden – continue to enjoy robust economic growth. By allowing this free movement of labour unconditionally and immediately, older member states can show unity with the newer ones and whilst resulting in diversity.

d) Exchanges

Exchanges promote by unity understanding shared European heritage, values and sense of humour while celebrating by diversity by discovering new cultures, languages and friends. This allows for the emergence of a real European demos from whom leadership of Europe can come. However, in order to consolidate these exchanges, appropriate social and economic policies must facilitate citizens wishing to make their life in another member state.

e) Economic/social policies

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, a federal Europe might be one of the only ways to preserve different social models. On the other hand, diversity can only be preserved and enhanced if there is a minimal social equality throughout the Union. In other words, economic and social policies must ensure the efficient and effective transnational flows of labour.

3. Participation

In order to ensure unity in diversity, minorities must be able to share a sense of identification with their nation-state and their Union. Whilst in the short run minorities might feel threatened, in the long run they must see that their diversity is not in conflict with European unity. This has to be achieved by fostering a common identity, a civic mindedness making minorities wanting to contribute to the community instead of feeling apart.

Diversity in Unity socially legitimises the Union by enabling every person to recognise his place in this people's Europe.