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EDITORIAL

By Margaritis Schinas

Citizens first

“Man is the measure of all things”: truth and power ultimately rest with the citizen (the Protagoras equivalent to “man” in modern times).

As we approach the final June meeting of EU Heads of State and Government before next year’s European elections, the issue of citizens’ involvement comes back with force: on one hand, as a means to promote civil society which is a regular interlocutor of EU the institutions and, on the other, as a source of legitimacy in shaping the future of economic governance in Europe.

Citizens’ involvement in Europe has always been at the centre of public debate. The Lisbon Treaty introduced novel instruments for this purpose (Art. 11 and 17) and elevated this notion for the first time to the sphere of European primary law. However, as the EU is moving fast to complete the “3 Unions” – Banking, Fiscal and Political – the issue is again becoming a major (probably the key) determinant of the EU’s future success. It is no longer just about consulting or discussing with citizens and organised society. This time it will be about giving citizens the right

to shape EU decisions, enabling them to attribute blame and praise in the framework of a true political union that can sustain a genuine EMU.

The current issue of the *BEPA Monthly Brief* is precisely about citizens’ involvement in this rapidly changing political environment. Commission officials and renowned experts explore different avenues to harvest people’s opinions and nourish EU policy. Paul Nemitz, Director in DG JUST presents an account of Commission actions to engage with citizens across the spectrum of EU Policies. Isabelle Ioannides offers a review of the recent Think-Tanks Dialogue held in the presence of Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy. Katharina von Schnurbein explains the Commission’s involvement in the Dialogue with Art. 17 interlocutors. Finally, Johannes Pichler and Alexander Balthasar from the Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy, attempt to highlight the term “Open Dialogue” under Art. 11 of the Lisbon Treaty.

On a more personal note, this editorial is my last contribution to the *BEPA Monthly Brief* after three challenging years as Deputy Head of the Bureau. Only days before moving to a new professional assignment, I wish to thank the dozens of contributors and the thousands of readers who enhanced this Brief’s reputation as a useful vehicle to enrich the debate on European affairs.

1 The citizen at the heart of the EU debate

By Paul Nemitz*

The European Year of Citizens 2013 is an occasion to put citizens at the fore and engage with them in a dialogue on European citizenship and on the EU as a whole. The primary objective of the European Year is to inform EU citizens of their rights and other opportunities offered to them so that they can make the most of being Europeans.

More rights, more opportunities

EU citizenship, which is celebrating its 20th birthday, brings a stronger political dimension to the European project. As the Court of Justice of the European Union has repeatedly indicated, it is to become the fundamental status of the nationals of member states, enabling all EU citizens in a given situation to receive equal treatment, independently from their nationality.

This status comes with rights as fundamental as the freedom of movement: citizens' most cherished EU right and the one they associate more closely with EU citizenship. The right to free movement enables EU citizens to benefit fully from the opportunities of the single market to study, work, train, live in, or simply travel to another EU country. Indeed, EU citizens take billions of trips in the EU every year. Fourteen million citizens actually reside permanently in another member state. This right brings personal and economic benefits to EU citizens (even for those who stay at home), tightens bonds between Europeans, and fosters growth in the EU.

More rights, more democracy

EU citizenship also encompasses strong political rights which enable citizens to participate in the European democratic process. The Commission recently adopted a directive and recommendations to facilitate the exercise of their EU electoral rights and further enhance the transparency of European elections. Among other, it encourages national and European political parties to clarify their

affiliation and to reveal the name of their preferred candidate for the function of European Commission President and the candidate's programme. Fostering citizens' participation in the EU decision-making process and further enhancing democratic accountability and transparency are key elements in the run up to the 2014 European elections and for the future of the Union.

The EU Citizenship Report

On 8 May, on the eve of Europe Day, the Commission will present a report, its 2013 *EU Citizenship Report*, putting forward key initiatives that will remove obstacles hindering citizens from enjoying their EU rights when working, studying, training, living, traveling or shopping in the EU, or when participating in its democratic life. This report follows on a wide-ranging public consultation on EU citizenship that included 12,000 participants, Eurobarometer surveys, and dedicated events (e.g the Citizens' Dialogues) and events organised with other EU institutions. It therefore draws on ideas and concerns expressed by citizens, experts, politicians and civil society, and that were collected over a full year. This report also builds on the *European Citizenship Report* of 2010 that presented 25 initiatives on which the Commission has now delivered. The detailed account of these 25 actions will be included in the annex of the 2013 *EU Citizenship Report*.

The twelve new actions developed in the 2013 *EU Citizenship Report* cover six key areas:

Removing obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU: Nine out of ten Europeans consider unemployment or the economic situation as the most critical issues currently facing the Union. Citizens are calling for a true EU labour market enabling them to benefit from job opportunities in other member states. They also ask for initiatives making it possible for them to develop their skills and access quality training in other EU countries. In this spirit,

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the Commission proposals aim to enable and facilitate citizens to work, study and train in another EU country.

Cutting red tape in the member states: EU citizens know that they have the right to free movement. Yet they are still confronted with obstacles, often related to lengthy and/or unclear administrative procedures. Citizens want solutions to make their lives easier when travelling and living in the EU. In response, the Commission is taking steps to reduce excessive paperwork and simplify procedures in the EU member states.

Protecting the more vulnerable in the EU: During the citizen consultations, participants pointed to the specific difficulties people with disabilities encounter when moving across the EU. They also indicated that some citizens are more vulnerable when it comes to asserting their rights, in particular in criminal proceedings because, for instance, of their young age or their mental or physical condition. Consequently, the Commission is proposing to strengthen the rights of the more vulnerable citizens and suggests concrete steps.

Eliminating barriers to shopping in the EU: Cross-border online shopping is growing steadily in the EU. Moreover, a quarter of citizens who bought a product or service on the internet in 2012 have done so from sellers in other EU member states. Yet EU citizens still experience problems when shopping online. The Commission is therefore working to ensure that citizens are better informed, in particular when shopping online, and are offered easy ways to seek redress when things go wrong.

Targeted and accessible information in the EU: Much has been done to improve EU citizens' awareness of their rights, in particular through the 'Europe Direct' and 'Your Europe' one-stop shop. Nonetheless, only one out of four citizens feels fairly or very well informed about what they can do if their EU rights are not respected. To address this concern, the Commission is concentrating on further streamlining the information flow on EU rights and how to use them, and improving access to such information for citizens.

Participating in the democratic life of the EU: Full participation of EU citizens in the democratic life of the EU at all levels is at the very essence of Union citizenship. Promoting citizens' and civil society's involvement in a debate on European issues is a timely endeavour in the context of the European Year of Citizens and the upcoming European elections, which are key moments for citizens to have their say. In this context, the Commission is presenting ambitious avenues to promote EU citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU.

Citizens at the heart of EU action and at the centre of its agenda

As President Barroso underlined, "Europe has to be ever more democratic". Europeans will take the project forward if they see its concrete benefits for them and their families, if they can identify with its goal and vision, and if they are involved in the process.

With its 2013 *EU Citizenship Report* and the wide-ranging consultations that have helped shape it, the Commission draws on citizens' experiences to ensure that they can fully enjoy their EU rights and the benefits Union citizenship brings to them in their daily life. The report and the debates surrounding it, as well as the European Year of Citizens and the Citizens' Dialogues, are all steps taken to involve citizens alongside politicians, experts and civil society in a genuine debate on the way forward toward a stronger Union, where the citizen is at the heart of its action and at the centre of its agenda.



2 Think tanks debating the future of Europe

By Isabelle Ioannides*

The European Commission – its services and President Barroso himself – have increasingly engaged with think tanks at key moments of the policy-making process, attesting to the important role that this constituency can play and their contribution to ongoing debates on the future of Europe. In this spirit, President Barroso opened the fourth Brussels Think Tank Dialogue – the annual policy forum organised by leading Brussels-based think tanks to critically reflect on the state of the EU, address pressing political concerns, and offer insights on how to improve EU policies. This year’s Dialogue focused on EU “Federalism or Fragmentation”, pointing to two parallel developments: on one hand, a move towards further integration amid talk of ever more “Unions” – banking, fiscal, political – and, on the other, a disconnect between these political ambitions and popular sentiments that populist and extremist parties often instrumentalise.

The way forward

President Barroso while arguing that “institutionally the EU has developed tremendously during the crisis in order to avert fragmentation,” also recognised the emerging divisions. The current policies have helped reduced today’s biggest challenge (the unsustainable public and private debt), the need to deleverage and put Europe on a sound footing to render it more competitive and reignite growth. But for growth to be sustainable, President Barroso called for growth based on competitiveness and for social and political support of policies (at national and EU levels).

The debates focused on industrial policy and energy markets as a potential drive for growth and on the EU’s global role post-crisis. New industries (sectors that will only create jobs in the long run), innovation and green(er) technologies are at the centre of attention – there is little interest on existing resources and their potential for job creation. To increase employability, however, active labour market policies are important and so is investing in skills/training to boost innovation. Free Trade Agreements (FTA) and strategic

partnerships are beneficial (especially in the short-term), but they must go beyond trade. Member states have industrialised at different rates and their success has been uneven; better cooperation and coordination (“active solidarity”) can help bridge this gap. The energy market faces similar challenges: countries are unevenly interconnected in the European gas market. To move the EU ETC forward urgency in action, target alignment, competitiveness, supply side flexibility, governance and international interaction are essential.

Europe must also rethink its role in a changing, complex and inter-connected world characterised by multi-level governance: the peace, democracy and prosperity discourse is no longer sufficient. An FTA with the United States would substantially boost the EU’s (soft) power, which could be further strengthened through the pooling and sharing of diplomatic capabilities across EU member states. A renewed European Security Strategy must consider the changing international environment, emphasising the strategic role of an enlarged neighbourhood. To be considered a relevant and key contender in policy, the EU must be more assertive about its place in the world: does the EU want to go regional (concentrate on its immediate neighbourhood) or be global (venture further away, e.g. in the Asia Pacific). Regardless, the EU should recognise that the pivot has moved to Asia and it is important to engage through multilateralism with all strategic partners.

President Van Rompuy closed the event emphasising the importance of timing and the lack of it. A long-term vision and urgent decisions will help keep the momentum on the banking union and ensure that we do not end up with a half-built system – single supervision and single resolution go together and both changes can be introduced within the current Treaty. Such changes will impact on democratic accountability and political legitimacy. Thus, when decisions involve both national and European competences double legitimacy (involving the EP) is needed. As President Van Rompuy stated, “pas à pas, on va loin”. For changes to materialise, political commitment will be key.

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3 The challenge of regaining trust

By Katharina von Schnurbein*

With the Lisbon Treaty, a particular aspect of the dialogue with citizens was enshrined in primary law: the open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, as laid down in Article 17 TEU. In this context, the Commission regularly exchanges views with these stakeholders on key aspects of EU policy. (For an analysis on Art. 17, please refer to the *BEPA Monthly Brief* issue 59). Concerns across the board include: diminishing levels of trust in the European project; lack of awareness of European citizenship; and a growing gap between citizens and EU institutions reinforced by the ongoing crisis.

Trust of Europeans in the EU institutions has long hovered around 50% until it dropped radically in the wake of the crisis in 2010, and is now at 31%. Figures are even worse for the 18-30 year olds, due to unemployment skyrocketing in some EU member states. Every politician knows how easy it is to lose trust and how difficult it is to regain it. The number one concern of citizens across the EU remains unemployment. But jobs and growth are created by business, ideally supported by structural reforms, usually implemented at national level. The recent EU Youth Employment Initiative was an important signal, yet the EU's overall scope of action – and thus a possibility for credit – is limited in the sphere of social affairs and labour market reforms.

The peace narrative – as valid as it undoubtedly is – no longer echoes with many Europeans. Instead, in line with an increasing individualistic society, people, and indeed member states, ask “what’s in it for me?” Much of the mistrust has been attributed – probably unjustly – to the EU: exiting the crisis, although initiated and orchestrated at European level, is always agreed with national governments. Nonetheless, the EU project is in urgent need to regain trust and credibility. In order to do so, the Union must demonstrate what its values mean in practice.

« Ré-enchanter l’Europe des citoyens » – but how?

Recent exchanges on the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (ECFR) with several organisations in the context of the “article 17 dialogue” provide useful examples of citizens’ concerns. Strengthening consumer rights – especially regarding roaming fees or air passenger rights – was received positively. Citizens welcome moves on data protection, fair and just working conditions or non-discrimination and equality. But there are many areas where the EU can still sharpen its profile.

Some interlocutors have raised with the Commission the issue of restitution of property, as a relic of WWII or Communist regimes. While such claims fall under national competence, they point to the fact that the ECFR has become part of the *acquis communautaire* and that article 17 guarantees the Right to property.

Other interlocutors take issue with the fact that while article 33 of the Charter stipulates “the family shall enjoy legal, economic and social protection”, EU institutions are hesitant to use the term “family” and indeed some member states are increasingly removing the specific protection granted to families.

Equality of sexes not being fully established – either in employment or society at large – is of concern to many interlocutors. Commission efforts to reduce the gender pay gap and introduce a quota for women in the highest decision making bodies has been welcomed, but needs to be endorsed on the ground.

Corruption also worries many EU citizens; they do not trust their own governments to tackle the issue. The EU, with the recently announced biannual Anticorruption report, can show citizens that it is willing to address the issue, despite likely pressure from national authorities.

Churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations reflect an important part of society. Accordingly, it is an asset for the EU institutions to listen to these voices and include them in the policy-making process.

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4 “Open dialogue” with citizens

By Johannes W. Pichler* and Alexander Balthasar**

The Lisbon Treaty has set democracy standards worldwide by creating transnational, multi-channeling, permanent political communication among the entire EU electorate, between civil society and associations, and between these and the EU institutions.

The underlying philosophy is that “every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union.” Likewise, “decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen.” Both of these prerogatives included in Article 10 (3) of TEU promise: it is not just about the European peoples, but really about every single person, about you and me, taken literally.

The legal context

The core implementing instrument is the so called “vertical” dialogue under Article 11 (2) of TEU, where “institutions” and “civil society” shall meet on an *equal* footing. It is completed by the following:

- “horizontal” dialogue (Article 11 (1) TEU) and
- the “citizens’ initiative” (Article 11 (4) TEU, whereas
- “consultation” under Article 11 (3) TEU serves not only purposes of democratic “transparency” but also of “coherence” in the interest of the institutions.

Also, one should never forget: the principle of “representative democracy” (Art 10 [1] TEU) is still the prevalent principle.

Against this background, the instruments of Article 11 TEU have a very specific function: to enhance, in line with the preamble to the Lisbon Treaty, the democratic legitimacy, which cannot be secured by the representative machinery alone. Thus, Article 11 TEU, in essence, serves political communication purposes.

Nonetheless, this communication may be labeled “participatory” and “deliberative”, giving more weight to the quality of the argument than to the sheer quantity of participants. It therefore links to the overall obligation enshrined in Article 296 (2) TEU to give reasons for diverse legal acts of the EU institutions.

Open Questions

The correct interpretation of the prevailing telos of Article 11 is, however, crucial when it comes to the following questions:

How to deal with the semantic variation between “citizens”, “civil society”, “representative associations” or even, a bit strange in a democratic context, “parties concerned”? And what about lobbyists that are not explicitly mentioned in this enumeration, but evidently are also partners in the dialogue?

How seriously can the element “as closely as possible to the citizen” be taken in an area of about a 500 million citizenry?

How can the EU institutions foster the communication and self-organisation of this “civil society” under the provision of Article 11(1) TEU without infringing the independence of these citizens and their freedom of association?

When organising three workshops on the meaning of Article 11 (2) TEU in Brussels from October 2011 to January 2012, the above-mentioned questions and ambiguities were taken into account. We endeavoured to receive answers from the partners in the dialogue themselves. A representative sample of the participants’ views can be found in our volume *Open Dialogue between EU Institutions and Citizens – Chances and Challenges* (intersentia/Antwerp; nww, Wein/Graz 2013). Our conclusions and recommendations which were, in turn, inspired by the participants’ interventions and contributions, are also included

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in the volume. Among these conclusions and recommendations, we highlight the most important ones in the following sections.

Conclusions – Engaging with citizens

All parts of Article 11 TEU are likewise legally binding and need therefore proper implementation by EU secondary law. While it is true that only paragraph 4 calls for the “ordinary legislator”, the silence of the previous paragraphs in this respect simply allows more flexibility in choosing the appropriate legal basis, in particular tailor-made rules enshrined in the respective *rules of procedure*.

Article 11 (2) TEU, as part of the “democratic principles”, is a general, fundamental provision that may be reiterated elsewhere in primary law, for *specific fields of application*. We therefore have no doubt that the dialogue with “churches” and “philosophical ... organisations” under Article 17 (3) TEU is, in principle, also covered already by Article 11 (2) TEU. Given the importance of “values” now enshrined in Article 2 TEU – and, at the same time, their high degree of vagueness – we even think that this dialogue on values will be decisive for the results which can be reached in all other formats of the “civil dialogue”.

Understanding “democracy” envisaged in Article 11 TEU as a “deliberative” one enables us to include in principle “any citizen of the Union” (Article 15 (3) TEU), provided that (s)he is able to put forward an outstanding argument. This inclusion is a challenge, but not an insurmountable one (see below).

Recommendations for the ‘Future of Europe’

“The Union” is not to be confused with its European layer. Rather, we should remind ourselves more of the multilevelled structure of the Union and its multilevel governance architecture. As a consequence, “the institutions” should realise that they are not just a monolith but an “umbrella”, comprising many elements outside Brussels.

This is obviously true with regard to the European Council and the Council which are composed of governments of the member states. Therefore, national heads of state and (prime) ministers should act much more also on national

level as members of the (European) Council. The European Parliament could make more use of cooperation with national parliaments (already provided in Article 12 (f) TEU) and even regional assemblies in order to facilitate access of citizens to EU legislation. Also, the European Ombudsman should intensify cooperation with national and even regional counterparts.

But the Commission also disposes of *representations* in every member state and, in addition, of more than 30 *agencies* dispersed throughout Europe. Each of these offices away from Brussels could very well serve as a *nucleus* for keeping in touch with specific segments of the Union’s population.

Moreover, “civil society” should resist the temptation of bringing each issue of EU politics immediately to the central level. Even when action on the central level is necessary, the respective representatives in Brussels should strive not to lose contact with their national and even regional bases.

As to the means of communication, we urgently recommend the use of modern “e-government” tools, not with a view to replacing the face-to-face dialogue between EU institutions and organisations, but to support the preparatory steps for debate. We suggest therefore at least an ‘e-Participation Citizens Platform Tool’ in analogy to the ECI online voting tool, supported “by appropriate means” (Article 11(1) TEU) by the European Commission. Furthermore, we would like to encourage other modern forms of political communication such as “collaborative”, “cooperative” or “fluid” democracy.

Finally, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which has consistently focused for more than ten years putting great emphasis on the improvement of what is now the dialogue under Article 11 (2) TEU, continues to host all forms of civil society and encourage discussions among all its different interlocutors. In doing so, it also demonstrates that there is indeed an interpretation of Article 11 (1) TEU that is not in contradiction with fundamental rights. What is true for the EESC, however, could very well also serve as a model to be followed by its twin, the Committee of the Regions.

5 Think Tank Twitter

Think Tank Twitter (TTT) aims to provide regular information and updates on what is produced by think tanks and research centres across Europe (and beyond) on EU policy issues. As an analogy to the original Twitter, each summary – or tweet – does not exceed 140 words, rather than characters. Those who wish to signal new publications for possible inclusion can send them to the email address bepa-think-tank-twitter@ec.europa.eu

Strengthening the Core or Splitting Europe?

The author introduces two approaches to cope with differentiated integration (DI) in a multi-speed Europe: first, the “EU as a toolbox”, a highly flexible strategy where member states remain the key actors deciding their level of integration tailored to their interests. Second, the EU-focused “centre of gravity”, consisting of a strongly integrated group of member states. Integration would be highly permeable and anchored in the EU’s institutional framework. He suggests accepting DI as the primary method of integration, but ensuring its permeability. DI is developed only within the EU framework; intergovernmental elements must be limited. In the long run, the EU needs to consolidate and somewhat harmonise integration levels to find the right balance between flexibility and the capacity to act together effectively.

http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2013_RP02_orz.pdf

We Cannot Solve the Crisis with the Same Policies, which provoked it.

The current austerity policy is based on the assumption that social policy is a burden for the economy and that it discourages investment and job creation because it constrains the supply side. Social spending is at the frontline of austerity plans: retirement age rose and unemployment benefits were reduced. The author argues that it is wrong to wait for markets to deliver necessary investments. He suggests to collectively invest in sustainable and innovative economic activities: support the youth in accordance with the European youth guarantee; ensure gender equality; and rise employment quality (e.g. through regular training, promoting lifelong learning). He suggests following the lead of the Commission’s “social investment package” that presents social costs not as a burden for the economy but as an opportunity.

<http://crisisobs.gr/en/2013/03/we-cannot-solve-the-crisis-with-the-same-policies-which-provoked-it-we-need-to-implement-new-policies-capable-of-building-a-quality-future-for-all/>

The New Bail-in Doctrine: A recipe for banking crises and depression in the eurozone

The author argues that Cyprus will serve as a template for possible future bailouts, which could also affect deposit holders. This is a negative development, firstly because it increases systemic risks making a future bank crisis more likely, and secondly because the economic costs for the bailed-in countries are very large. Instead of a Cyprus-style bail-in, he suggests a much stricter regulation of banks: impose higher capital ratios and separate investment from commercial banking. Also, introducing a cap on interest rates paid out could limit competition between banks. Since the responsibility for the crisis is a shared one, so should the burden. Taxpayers’ and depositors’ money needs to be treated and protected in the same way.

<http://www.ceps.eu/book/new-bail-doctrine-recipe-banking-crisis-and-depression-eurozone>

EU No, Euro Yes? European public opinions facing the crisis (2007-2012)

The author examines EU public opinion from three perspectives. First, EU perception in general (confidence in the EU, its image and its future direction); second, perception of the financial crisis (how it is addressed and how it impacts the future); and last, attitudes around the euro. While EU public opinion has been in decline since 2007, there is still a slight relative majority of Europeans that are optimistic when looking at Europe’s future. Yet, in southern European countries, a large majority is pessimistic (Greece: 71 percent). Two out of three citizens within the eurozone are in favour of the common currency. The author concludes that while Europeans want the euro, they are sceptical towards the EU.

<http://www.notre-europe.eu/media/opinionpubliquecrisezoneeuro-debomy-ne-ijd-mar13.pdf>

The EU Performance in the Global Competition for Highly-Skilled Migrants

Although highly skilled migrants (HSM) are much needed in the EU, efforts to attract them are met with difficulties. Contrary to the US labour market, the EU falls short of providing a truly intra-European market. Also, the Commission's Blue Card Directive is timidly designed: it only proposes for the mid-term to enhance cooperation for sub-sets of member states (e.g. those with similar income patterns) and to open up the academic admissions gate through the harmonisation of legislation and the promotion of English in universities. Instead of competing against each other in attracting HSMs, member states need to work together. In the long term, cooperation will lead to a strengthened EU intra-labour mobility that can be further reinforced by lowering bureaucratic obstacles and promoting mutual recognition of degrees and official documents.

<http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/a27c8e804f089ebe87b0cf09dfd350c4/TGAE-Gonzalez-Parkes-Sorroza-Ette-EU-global-competition-high-skilled-migrants.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=a27c8e804f089ebe87b0cf09dfd350c4>

Europe's Trade Strategy: Promise or peril?

In an effort to boost export sales, more and more member states have pursued commercial diplomacy and bilateral trade deals. Although the trade strategy addresses Europe's short-term problem – a lack of domestic demand – it has been criticised: not only do these deals undercut EU trade efforts, but the probability that they significantly increase EU exports as a whole is very low. An alternative path would be for the EU to try and increase its low rate of productivity growth focusing primarily on high value added activities. To do so, the author suggests that the EU fosters competition among firms, making them more productive and innovative, and encourage the clustering of firms according to their field. Moreover, further market integration is recommended to help solve Europe's long-term problem: the slow rate of productivity growth.

<http://www.fride.org/publication-newsletter/1109/europe's-trade-strategy:-promise-or-peril?>

The Struggle for Pluralism after the North African Revolutions

The 'Arab spring' in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia brought hope for democracy and national unity. Today however, it is unclear where these societies are heading. They find themselves in an important transitional phase that will set the ground for their future development. While the EU has an interest in influencing the transition, the benefit of intervention is questionable. The author suggests offering (or withholding) endorsement to governing regimes, and supporting institutional reform. The EU must focus on the conduct of elections and insist that only political consensus can lead towards prosperity and stability. European action is most credible when underpinned by conditionality, in accordance with the 'more-for-more' principle. Yet, it is clear that the reduction of aid fuels unrest; accordingly, such cuts are best applied only when red lines are crossed.

http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR74_PLURALISM_REPORT.pdf

A European Strategy towards East Asia: Moving from good intentions to action

The EU has a unique advantage in East Asia: its economic weight and its image as a non-threatening partner. Despite the shared concerns between the EU and the US in the region, the EU should be cautious when cooperating with the US to ensure that it does not lose its credibility as an independent actor. A successful EU strategy must be unified and clearly prioritise areas where the EU can realistically have an impact. China is at the centre of the strategy, founded on economic cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, and strategic partnership. Beyond that, it is important to cooperate with ASEAN and like-minded partners as spillover effects are likely. Enhancing bilateral trade and investment conditions while pursuing principled policies towards Southeast Asian nations should be emphasised.

<http://www.ui.se/eng/upl/files/86980.pdf>

6 BEPA News

Événements

Le 22 avril, le BEPA, l'association européenne de la pensée libre (EAFI) et l'association Égale ont organisé conjointement un séminaire sur le thème « Ré-enchanter l'Europe des Citoyens ». Une centaine de spécialistes venant de la Commission et de ces deux associations se sont rencontrés pour discuter des aspects politiques, institutionnels et sociétaux qui affectent les citoyens et de la façon de les remettre au cœur du projet européen.

Le 23 avril, le BEPA a lancé au Bozar l'initiative « A new narrative for Europe ». Le Président Barroso a ouvert cet événement, puis la Vice-Présidente Reding et la Commissaire Vassiliou ont répondu à des questions posées par le public. Une centaine de personnalités provenant du monde culturel et créatif y ont participé. Cette initiative vise au renouvellement du discours traditionnel sur l'Europe, axé autour de l'idée de la paix et fondé sur la notion d'intégration économique et politique, et se focalise sur le rôle de l'Europe dans le nouvel ordre mondial et sur l'identification de valeurs culturelles communes unissant les citoyens européens à travers les frontières.

Le 30 avril s'est déroulée une « Rencontre stratégique sur High Performance Computing (HPC) », présidée par la professeure Anne Glover, conseillère scientifique en chef du Président de la Commission, et par Robert Madelin, Directeur Général de la DG CNECT. Les participants ont eu l'occasion de débattre des défis et des opportunités de la compétitivité européenne dans le HPC et de définir les prochaines étapes ainsi que les actions à mener dans ce domaine.

Activités à venir

Le BEPA organise le 7 mai une conférence intitulée « The Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine EMU ». Celle-ci sera ouverte par le Président José Manuel Barroso et se poursuivra par une table ronde réunissant le Vice-Président Olli Rehn, le Président de l'Eurogroupe Jeroen Dijsselbloem et le Ministre des Finances du Portugal Vitor Gaspar. Les intervenants de haut niveau auront l'occasion de discuter de l'importance du Blueprint pour les citoyens européens et de la meilleure manière de s'assurer

que ceux-ci en assimilent les enjeux, mais aussi comment le processus inhérent à la mise en œuvre du Blueprint peut être soutenu par un renforcement du principe de responsabilité démocratique en Europe.

Le 15 mai le BEPA, la Fédération Humaniste Européenne et la Grande Loge Féminine de France organisent un colloque intitulé « Le populisme en Europe ». Environ 50 participants échangeront des points de vue sur la montée du populisme et sur les mesures prises par les institutions européennes pour y répondre, notamment en vue des élections européennes de 2014.

Cette année comme les années précédentes les Présidents de la Commission, du Conseil et du Parlement européen rencontreront des hauts dignitaires des religions présentes en Europe. La réunion aura lieu le 30 mai dans le cadre de l'année des citoyens 2013, qui est consacrée aux droits liés à la citoyenneté européenne. Les échanges entre les participants porteront sur les défis auxquels l'Europe fait face et sur les efforts faits par l'UE pour mettre les citoyens au cœur du projet européen dans un monde en mutation.

Les 27 et 28 mai, le Président Barroso sera l'hôte de la 3^e réunion de haut niveau consacrée au dialogue inter-régional sur la démocratie. Les participants incluent la Commissaire Georgieva ainsi que les secrétaires généraux et hauts responsables des organisations régionales. Cet événement dont les discussions porteront sur l'État de droit et la gouvernance globale bénéficiera du soutien de l'Institut pour la démocratie et l'assistance électorale (IDEA).

Enfin, le 28 mai, le BEPA organisera un séminaire intitulé « Implications du gaz de schiste pour l'avenir énergétique de l'Europe ». Les panélistes examineront les conséquences que la révolution globale du pétrole et du gaz conventionnel ont pour l'Europe et évalueront ses effets sur la compétitivité de l'UE, notamment par rapport aux États-Unis. Les discussions se développeront également autour des choix que l'UE et ses États membres doivent faire pendant la phase de réflexion où les gouvernements et les entreprises envisagent ou non de recourir aux ressources potentielles de gaz de schiste sur le continent.