

SOLIDARITY AND STRENGTH THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Executive summary



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FOREWORD

With the ink on the Treaty of Lisbon scarcely dry, the European debt crisis has once more raised the question as to how the EU should be constituted. The Union's ability to hold together and withstand the crisis is being put to the test. The EU finds itself at a crossroads.

Against this background, the Heinrich Böll Foundation set up a commission in 2010 to examine the future of the EU and a summary of its findings can be found in this publication. The remit of this commission of 50 experts from politics, the scientific community and civil society, was to indicate key perspectives in European policy and propose ways of carrying them out that would bring new dynamism to European cooperation.

Solidarity and strength, the guiding themes of the Commission, set the course for the future of Europe. Only through the development of cooperative strength can Europe gain the necessary power to meet the challenges of the 21st century and successfully represent its values. Only through European solidarity, which is based on common laws and duties, can the EU become capable of acting within its borders and abroad.

We need an open debate about the way forward, especially in these times of crisis and scepticism of European institutions. How far should, or can, European solidarity go? What kind of binding rules does a community need if its members are to stand together in times of crisis? What kind of political course must we now steer if we are to bring the EU once more to the forefront? And, in future, what kind of global tasks must the EU undertake?

The policy suggestions expressed in the enclosed summary do not necessarily reflect the opinion of all members of the expert commission fully. The primary objective of this publication is to act as an impetus for Europe wide debate. Only through such a transnational process comprising many voices can the vision of a future Europe develop.

Berlin, September 2011

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Solidarity and Strength: the future of the EU

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The European debt crisis once more raises the question of how the EU should be constituted. The premise that a currency union would be possible without a fully committed union and common fiscal policy has been shown to be false. The Euro zone needs new rules and a re-allocation of competences, which would deeply interfere with the sovereignty of Member States.

The Union's ability to hold together and withstand the crisis is being put to the test. The EU finds itself at a crossroads. On the one hand the debt crisis has shown the necessity for increased coordination and integration. On the other, support for a closer union with increased solidarity is dwindling. Many citizens have the impression that European integration is being driven forward without reference to them or parliamentary institutions and that ever more power emanates from the anonymous and shadowy power that is "Brussels."

A further integration that is enacted top-down by the political elite will fail. For a long period, the EU was built on the more or less silent assent of European nations. This was because at its core it was a promise to construct a peaceful union that would end the bloody chapter of war between European countries. Its custodianship of democracy, personal freedom and economic affluence also played a part in the acceptance of the EU. Even the guarantee of democracy, personal freedoms and economic wealth contributed to the European Union being accepted. In the meantime, the excessive debt of some Member States has thrown the whole EU into a deep crisis, in which the advantages of a currency union are for many no longer recognisable as the risks have moved into the foreground. The debt crisis threatens to become a crisis of legitimacy for the EU.

Today, the answer to this must, above all, lie in a *strengthening of European democracy*. It is not a panacea for solving all problems, but European integration cannot go ahead without more European democracy. The EU cannot simply view its legitimacy in terms of economic output but must also find ways to measure how much democratic self-determination it has enabled. It is only by sharing sovereignty that European countries can together secure the right to self-determination. If each country simply acts for itself then all will become the playthings of globalisation and be at the mercy of the new power relationships that it carries with it.

Despite scepticism of increased centralisation of political decision-making, there is a growing expectation that the EU will meet pressing global challenges. There is broad recognition that Europe needs to come together if it is to shape global events. Decisive will be "how" to achieve deeper integration, especially the question of democratic transparency and participation. A European Union, in which men and women feel politically dispossessed but at the same time have to assume liability for grave policy errors, would not be a sustainable model.

Especially at a time when the EU is moving to another stage of political integration we need an open debate as to the finality, structure and political scope of the Union. It is about more than overcoming the debt crisis: the debate concerns fundamental questions as to the direction to take and a new narrative for Europe.

A Europe of Solidarity and Strength

More than ever, solidarity and strength have become key concepts for the future of the EU. Without a form of cohesion marked by solidarity, there can be no capacity to act either inside or outside the Union. The debt crisis has therefore necessitated a measure of mutual commitment, common regulation and invasions of sovereignty that had previously been excluded but today are viewed as a mark of the European currency union's assertiveness.

Solidarity and Strength

Solidarity and strength are the guiding themes for the future of the EU. Here, solidarity is not only a decree of EU internal policies but also a commitment to adjust international politics to global fairness. Strength means to be able to act within and outside of our borders. This includes advocating aggressively for the values and political model of the European Union.

Solidarity has been, and is, a motor for European integration. It is anchored in the Treaties – for example in the principle of mutual assistance or in the statements concerning economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European community. In a material sense, solidarity has, to date, been most reflected in the agricultural, structural and cohesion funds. The Solidarity Fund provides assistance in the case of natural disasters and emergencies for which a country bears no responsibility.

Solidarity that comes about spontaneously or follows an event, such as with security threats, humanitarian crises or natural disasters, is an undisputed value that extends beyond European borders. In heterogeneous political communities such as the EU, solidarity is based on reciprocity and mutual responsibility. *Solidarity as a principle of mutual assurance* is an important source of European cohesion. Solidarity in this sense is not altruism but structured self interest.

It is particularly valid where there is awareness of mutual dependence. The EU's internal redistribution policy is based on the understanding that reducing the prosperity gap is not only advantageous for poorer regions but also for the wealthier ones.

In any system incorporating solidarity there are always sources of friction between donors and recipients. Success is based on a com-

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mitment to come to each other's aid for the wellbeing of the whole community. The debt crisis is the result of a lack of commitment to the common wellbeing: on the one hand excessive debt and fabricated statistics and on the other failure to adhere to the Stability Pact. In the long term, communities based on solidarity will only work when there are provisions to deter or sanction behaviour that runs counter to solidarity. Solidarity communities can therefore only function over time, if there are arrangements to avoid or sanction "bad" behaviour.

The debt crisis has been something of an ordeal for solidarity between Member States and their readiness to take responsibility for each other. The fact today is that in the public consciousness the EU is *de facto* based on solidarity. Now, we need to decide if we are to go further down this path. We would like to campaign for this.

Cooperative strength

European integration is also an answer to the decline in the power European nation states have to shape events in a globalised world. It comes down to a democratically agreed European policy that can really impact other global players.

The maintenance and development of the values, institutions and goals of the European project can only be achieved if the EU realises its global responsibilities. It is not just about defending oneself from the effects of global change. The EU must demonstrate the worth of the liberal constitutional state, the social and environmental market economy and the value of supra national integration. This will be the most successful way to campaign for this political model.

New projects to enhance the image of the European Union

To win popular support the EU needs new key projects that will encourage more dynamic forms of cooperation and clearly demonstrate the added value that Europe brings; such projects might include areas that go beyond the maintenance of peace, security and freedom. Here, relevant projects are those that further identity and which create a new basis of legitimacy beyond the preservation of peace, security and freedom.

Primarily the Union must be about democracy but it should also include social and environmental progress.

More Europe Needs More Democracy

Advances in the integration process are only possible in a 'living democracy', in which participation and control of the democratic institutions, especially the European and national parliaments, are strengthened and the rights of citizens to be involved in the process are also extended. In concrete terms this means:

- the European Parliament to be strengthened by the addition of the right of initiative;
- the Commission to be linked to the party distribution in the European Parliament;
- future minority parties and individual MEPs to have increased rights;
- transnational lists for European Parliament elections to make them more European;
- improvements in the status of European wide parties and political foundations;
- widening of the areas that fall within the European Citizens' Initiative.

European democracy and democracy in the Member States are inextricably bound together. The EU can only realise its democratic character in cooperation with the democratic institutions of its Member States. The reverse is also true. The EU must act as a control mechanism and counteract undemocratic developments in Member States (as currently in Hungary) and call for a public debate on such issues. At the same time the EU must demonstrate its role as the guarantor of equal opportunity and equality of participation for all, including in the Member States. The European Parliament and the Commission have an control function and must guarantee that the Member States uphold the principles of equal opportunity and rights for all.

Competences need to be reallocated to the European level if this is for the benefit of the community and increases the community's courses for action. If this is not the case, Europe's local, regional or national competences need to be strengthened. The democratic *multi-level system* and the principle of *subsidiary* need to be accepted literally. Here, it is necessary to define the assets not only of the European level but also of action at the local and national levels.

European Convention

For "**more Europe**" to go hand in hand with "**more democracy**", we will need, in the foreseeable future, a *new European convention* where all the various ideas as to where Europe is going can be brought together and a collaborative effort made to answer the questions that arise.

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Those countries that do not want to participate in common projects can remain outside without in any way blocking progress towards more integration. This seems particularly attractive when matched with the hope that such associations will prove increasingly attractive to those Member States remaining outside and precipitate the sort of reforms that would allow them to join in future. This is the idea behind a “Europe of concentric circles.”

At the same time, however, this model harbours the danger that too much differentiated integration will compromise the Union and amplify its centrifugal force. A multi-speed Europe must not result in a Union that breaks up into a core and a periphery. In addition a strongly differentiated EU with numerous sub organizations would be even more complex and difficult to understand. We also need to take into account the effect it will have on common Union citizenship with its equal rights and opportunities. Therefore differentiated integration should only be used in a balanced fashion. Enhanced cooperation must be given priority over intergovernmental coordination (*i.e.* discussion between individual governments). A variety of parallel structures outside parliamentary control and codetermination procedure would be a step backwards for European integration.

Solidarity and Strength: a leitmotif for the future of Europe

Independent of whatever vision of the EU we follow – a confederation or the great leap forward to a united states of Europe – success will fundamentally depend on whether the citizens trust the Union’s institutions and its decision making processes. Transparency, democratic control, checks and balance and openness to the participation of Europe’s citizens are all as indispensable as the development of a European public opinion.

European unification is foundering. To re-energise the process the EU needs to concentrate on a number of manageable key projects that clearly demonstrate the value added of European cooperation – projects that Member States could not achieve on their own. Europe’s citizens will need to be properly informed and encouraged to debate the issues. European solidarity needs to be higher up the agenda; it needs to take the strengths of the Member States and combine them into an even stronger whole. Solidarity and strength could provide the leitmotif to steer us back on course to a united Europe.

Commission recommendations

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1. The future is sustainable: Green solutions to the economic and debt crises

The European Union is undergoing its most serious economic and financial crisis since 2008. Debt and the crisis in the financial sector are posing enormous challenges for the European Union and the euro zone. There is growing dissatisfaction with the austerity measures and reforms in those countries are coming under pressure. In the creditor countries, support for the assistance packages is rapidly declining. In the meantime, it has also become clear that Europe has been recovering from the economic crisis more slowly than other regions of the world and as a result of the global restructuring taking place will find the necessary social and economic adjustments even more difficult to make. Europe is losing economic clout and therefore its influence to shape global affairs.

The crisis is simultaneously a threat and an opportunity. It has clearly demonstrated how dependent the members of the EU are on each other. Since 2008 there has been a political dynamism that only a short time ago would have been unthinkable. To get to grips with the current continuing crisis and in order to overcome future similar situations, the Member States need to adapt the ways in which they act in concert and rethink the relationship between state and market. There is a growing need to rethink and reshape what constitutes European solidarity.

In order to overcome the crisis, the EU requires more concrete demonstrations of solidarity especially as we are currently in a time when such feelings are rather weak. Currency union, as has been clearly demonstrated, is impossible without fiscal and economic coordination. Without proper and binding solidarity the euro will not survive and the cohesion and competitiveness of the EU will be in danger. To strengthen the EU we need the following measures:

— the EU must coordinate and control its budget and economic policies so that Member States will no longer be able to act deliberately in a manner that goes against the common interest. To achieve this requires a permanent mechanism to ensure excessive debt is avoided. To calm markets and stave off speculators we need to go further than the current European stability mechanism. The EU needs a common European bond to cover individual sovereign debt of up to 60 percent of GDP;

— the European single market for finance requires stricter oversight. To do this will need European legislation (directly enforced by one of the EU institutions) to control banks engaging in cross border activities. The European supervisory body should also additionally take charge of consumer protection;

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— imbalances in the euro area must be swiftly and permanently levelled out. It is now a question of ensuring that those countries in crisis have opportunities for growth. The *Green New Deal* offers the right first steps. Environmental innovation and social participation are the basis for future sustainable growth in Europe.

— social and environmental advance must play a central role in European integration. This does not mean that social systems have to be the same but rather there should be minimum standards for pay and social security. In view of the demographic situation, social security must take into account sexual equality and be fair to all generations;

— we need to review the EU's receipts and expenses. Competences that are for the general good of the community and allow for more efficient action should be shifted to the European level. Where this is not the case, competences should remain at the local or national level in the interest of maintaining Europe's diversity;

— the EU must ensure that economic and financial policies are better coordinated in external relations so that the Union is represented with a united front. If this does not happen, the Union will continue to lose international influence.

2. Facing new challenges: the future of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Agriculture is confronted with enormous social and ecological challenges. At the global level we need to feed a fast growing and increasingly urban population and reduce rural poverty in ever more difficult circumstances such as the effects of climate change, ever scarcer natural resources, advanced soil degradation and unstable world markets for agricultural products.

A system of agriculture that protects the environment, mitigates climate change and maintains biological diversity needs to be controlled at the European level. This has clear advantages for (1) cross border or global activities, (2) regional or national problems, for which those affected have insufficient resources (e.g. the preservation of rural areas in poorer regions), (3) areas that greatly overlap with well integrated policies such as the single market or international trade.

The Common Agricultural policy (CAP) is one of the European Union's most long standing communitised policies but, for the most part, it has only pursued goals geared to internal needs. Its most important goals were increased productivity, security of supply and income and overall stability. The CAP has contributed to wide ranging social and ecological problems both in the EU and in some southern countries and has frequently been in opposition to EU aims in the areas of development policy, environmental protection and climate change.

It is therefore time for a fundamental reorientation of Europe's agricultural policy. Its new mission should be sustainable agriculture that respects social and environmental needs. An agricultural policy for the future should, not only produce food but nurture the environment, provide a public good, produce decentralised energy, ensure viable rural areas and secure proper incomes. The EU must not pursue these goals at the expense of trading partners in other regions. The EU must practise fair trade with third parties, working with them as equitable partners, for only in this manner will developing countries be able to feed their people and protect their eco systems. The priorities of this kind of agriculture are the right to a sustainable and secure food supply that protects the resources of both Europe and other countries.

A new CAP will require:

- prices that fully reflect the environmental and climate impact of production;
- allowances for environmental and other social achievements from the public purse;
- means to anchor the farmer firmly in the marketing chain so as to make the prices of agricultural products more appropriate thus providing better income streams;
- a European agricultural trading policy not geared to high exports and that reduces the import of goods produced in a manner damaging to the environment by agreeing sustainability standards with the exporting countries.

3. A brighter future: European Energy policy

Climate change, conflict over resources, migration problems, rising global energy demand and the catastrophe at Fukushima all demonstrate that our energy supply system needs a complete overhaul. A sustainable energy policy that protects resources and the climate is what is required long term and one that gets out of nuclear power and into renewables.

European climate change and energy policies will have to meet these challenges. Although energy policy has, until now, been the concern of the Member States, the EU has set a compulsory target of a 80 to 95 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to 2050. The Union has clearly been dragging its feet in the area of renewable energy. Some EU countries continue to prefer nuclear, coal and gas and there are some very different approaches to energy market regulation. This makes it difficult to have a coherent European energy policy.

The EU has to view these current major challenges as an opportunity. To create a sustainable, strong and competitive Europe able to draw all its energy from renewable sources by 2050 will require the utmost common effort. Europe has some decisive advantages as a result of its size, climatic and geographical features. This potential will need to be realised in a communal and cost effective manner to ensure that European innovation competes effectively in the market.

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A sustainable European energy and climate change policy would not only serve to provide affordable, reliable and environmentally friendly energy production, it could also establish a new identity for Europe and promote a new political and economic dynamism. The three cornerstones of such a project would be renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy saving:

- a *European Community for Renewable Energy (ERENE)* could provide the conditions that would enable the EU to derive all its energy from renewable sources by 2050. The advantages of decentralised energy production and the use of local renewable sources will need to be combined with the advantages of a Europe-wide distribution network;

- in order to save energy, the EU must set compulsory targets to be implemented by national action plans in areas such as building construction, transport and industry;

- to increase energy efficiency, the EU needs to establish a regulatory framework to, for example, encourage energy saving building refurbishment, products and vehicles. With stricter energy efficiency standards and energy consumption labelling for appliances, the EU can help European products to be more competitive on the global market;

- the neighbourhood and foreign policies of the EU must also include references to climate change. In both neighbouring and developing countries sustainable energy and climate change policies must be promoted that will have a positive effect on local economic and health conditions. This will require coordinated and coherent EU neighbourhood, foreign, development and trade policies.

4. Towards an open agenda: the future of European Foreign and Security Policy

Global upheavals and new powers have increasingly called into question the European democratic system with its rule of law and respect for human rights. Europe is losing demographic, economic and political influence. The ending of the bloc system has made it increasingly difficult for Europe to construct firm alliances. And the question as to how wealth should be distributed in a world of ever increasing population and limited resources is potentially explosive.

The EU has shown that nation states whose mutual history was marked by bloody wars can successfully overcome the past and join together in a union, at the heart of which are universally accepted values. At the same time, the EU, because of the nature of its legal form, does not have the kind of power in foreign policy that larger nation states have. To date a common EU foreign policy only exists at the most rudimentary level. The EU often seems divided and unable to agree a common foreign policy position.

The EU, however, with its strong and proven system of networks would appear to be especially qualified to operate successfully in the multi layered systems in which states operate. The EU, as a new type of structure could be a living example of supra national cooperation and shared sovereignty,

democracy and human rights that could make a considerable contribution to the world developing in the spirit of international collaboration.

For this to succeed the EU needs to develop an “Opening -up agenda”. If Europe simply concentrates on ensuring that its values are secure in the “island” of the Union, rather than seeking to apply them universally, it will, in the end, sink into obscurity, an obscurity that could well threaten its own achievements. The new European narrative must be what it would like to share with the world and the motive must be global stability, freedom and prosperity. To ensure that this is viewed as credible, Europe will have to undertake international responsibility and strive for a global policy, from which all states can profit, as it grants them equal rights and shared responsibility.

■ For the European Union to play such a role it must present a united front to the outside world. It must therefore say goodbye to the principle of unanimity in foreign and security affairs while at the same time act in a manner that is doubly democratic at national and European level. The transition to majority voting in foreign and security policy urgently calls for increased democratic control and legitimacy.

■ At both national and European level, internal and external policies need to be better coordinated. Only in this manner can we approach and carry through the significant future responsibilities of a global foreign policy (the promotion of democracy, stemming climate change, assisting refugees and preventing armed conflict).

■ The European External Action Service (EEAS) must be the intermediary between third countries and EU Member States. To ensure this will be possible EEAS responsibilities will need to be expanded to include economic and trade policy as well as refugee issues and climate change.

■ If Europe wishes to deploy power based on its values, it must be prepared and able to operate independently of the USA and NATO in crisis situations, especially in its own area. A foreign policy that in the first instance seeks to prevent conflict or utilise peaceful solutions needs appropriate institutions and resources to prevent or react to such crises if it is to be regarded as credible. This will require a clear timetable being set for the “Zivilen Planziele 2010”. In tandem, work must begin on the establishment of a European peace corps.

■ Even if the EU is primarily a civilian force for peace, it still needs to have better coordination of its military capabilities. A precondition for this is consistent and wide-ranging parliamentary participation. Closer military cooperation in the EU will, for the foreseeable future, operate well under the level of a European army. The Lisbon Treaty, however, does offer the possibility of enhanced cooperation in the military area. This could allow for the establishment of action groups, even if not all Member States wish to participate in a specific mission. To promote better coordination of military tasks at the European level, thought should be given to the setting up of a common central command for such operations in Brussels.

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5. A new relationship between the EU and its neighbours. The future of European enlargement and neighbourhood policy

For a number of years there has been a tendency for Member States to regard the EU's neighbours as a problem. A widely held view is that relations with these neighbours should concentrate on trade and limiting migration. Latest developments in North Africa have shown that the EU needs to develop a new neighbourhood policy. This is first and foremost the case for the Mediterranean region but it also applies to Eastern European countries that have, for so long, been deliberately left hanging between being a neighbour and joining the Union.

The enlargement of the EU has come to a halt. One last, but not least, reason for this was the major error made in the last (2007) enlargement when certain elements of the Copenhagen Criteria (democracy, rule of law and minority rights) were neglected. Within the EU, willingness to take in new countries has considerably declined. In potential candidate countries the impression that the EU has lost interest in new members has intensified.

The EU would like its neighbourhood policy to harmonise its relations with adjacent states and create a "ring of democracies" around Europe. In addition the area of freedom, security and rule of law should be expanded by taking in new countries. To date the line of EU neighbourhood policy has been to stabilise the south and homogenisation in the east. At the same time it was accepted that EU and Member State foreign and stabilisation policies were often at the expense of human rights and democracy.

The European Union has reached a point where it can no longer simply carry on as before. It must re-orientate its relations with neighbouring countries. It needs to send a clear signal to those countries that have a real chance of one day becoming a member of the EU. Accession agreements that are permanently called into question (as in the case of Turkey) only poison the relationship and undermine the credibility of the Union. We advocate that the EU renews its promise to take in all European countries fulfilling the political and economic conditions. This, however, will require the EU to refine its structures and decision-making processes so as to make it possible to deal with an increasing number of diverse Member States without losing capacity to act.

At the same time the EU must ensure that its neighbourhood policy is more consistent with its core values. Positive conditionality is an important factor in this area and can be successful if it emphasises cooperation with non-governmental organisations. In those societies where politics is controversial and the political culture far from reaching European standards, the EU should give firm support to civil society and pluralist organisations and liberalise visa regulations particularly to cultivate contacts between young people. It is a question of providing neighbouring states with a realistic idea of their future accession chances given their current democratic development and how far they have incorporated the rule of law.

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The Green movement has always been a political movement rooted in the concepts of solidarity, shared responsibility and institutional transformation. More than ever, these are the values that need to be brought to the debate about Europe. Faced with economic and environmental challenges that threaten to overwhelm the European project, the Green movement needs to sharpen its political analysis and put forward a comprehensive programme for the future of Europe.

Following a debate initiated by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, this publication puts forward a series of proposals in areas such as foreign and security; agricultural; energy; economics and monetary and enlargement policy. The proposals are as ambitious as the challenges that they aim to confront, however they are only a starting point for the debate that needs to take place within the Green movement. This publication should be soon as a tool to facilitate that debate.

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