

YoungMEPs2016

Gli Entrance Statements

per Commissioni Tematiche e Gruppi Parlamentari

1. PROXY Committee's Entrance Statements

La Commissione PROXY aveva competenza e mandato di dibattere le questioni riguardanti le relazioni tra Unione Europea e i Paesi con essa confinanti (immigrazione, sviluppo e cooperazione, sicurezza del mar mediterraneo). Questi Entrance Statement riflettono le posizioni iniziali di ciascun gruppo parlamentare su queste tematiche.

1.1 EPP's Entrance Statement

- (1) Which is the opinion your Parliamentary Group has on E U's foreign affairs, especially in its proximity relations with neighbouring states?

The European Peoples Party strongly believes that the European Union should continually support the southern and eastern neighbourhoods. They believe that the EU should continue to invest in eastern partnership which they state aims to offer European perspective to neighbouring states such as, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. Having good EU relations with neighbouring states is an important of diplomacy and trade agreements. Closer EU relations with Turkey may be financially be official due to import/export however the geographical location of turkey and its potential membership of the EU means that irregular and regular migration will strain EU member states economic and social capacity. The EPP group believes that freedom of expression, citizens' rights to information and the organisation of free and fair elections are important and aim to spread these principles. Trade is of big importance as it plays a major role to internal and international affairs; trade makes a significant contribution to the creation of new jobs and allows for economic growth in Europe and it deepens the relationship between the EU and its partners.

- (2) Within this topic, which is the most urgent issue you think is needed to be

discussed?

Following on from topic one. Migration is the biggest threat to EU social and economic prosperity, There is a growing crisis of migration, refugees and asylum seekers. As a Conservative party, the EPP warns against free movement into EU member states. This is for a number of reasons: the previously stated economic and social stresses, a weakening of EU security due to porous borders, increase in crime due to migrants being unable to gain legal employment, a rise in far-right extremism, collapse of socialist institutions such as the British NHS and large scale withdrawal of money from EU member states economies as funds are sent by migrants back to families in non-EU states.

(3) Which solution you propose and which kind of Proposal the Parliament should adopt on this issue?

Solutions to this issue are as such; The EU must properly address the challenge of the migration influx from the Middle East and Northern Africa, they need to secure EU external borders to initially stem the flow of migrants and enable plans to be made. Have closer relations with countries which border the EU as these are often source and/or transit countries and have a role to play in the EU as border countries. Development of essential humanitarian aid to source countries is also important, in order to stabilise the situation and reduce migrants leaving in the first place.

1.2 S&D's Entrance Statement

At an international level, Socialists and Democrats are conscious of the numerous challenges that the EU is facing and has to face in the future. Migration, Ukraine crisis and Balkan stability, and international trade relations are just some of the several problems which involve a require an immediate and definite stance from the EU and its Institutions. With this document, the S&D group aims to clarify its positions about the international issues judging by the leading role they invest in order to ensure safety and social stability inside the Member States.

To begin with, the most emerging problem the European Union is facing nowadays is without doubt the migration crisis. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, between January 2015 and March 2016 over one million of refugees arrived to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey has been the main gateway state to the European Union, and the EU should certainly be more active in order to bring solutions to this global

humanitarian crisis. The S&D welcomes the European leaders' decision for the re-launching of the EU-Turkey accession negotiation process, since we believe that the relations between Turkey and the EU must be reinforced, especially in that time of need. We support the agreement reached on the 20th of March 2016 between the EU and Turkey to address the ad hoc issues resulting from the refugee crisis by sending back to Turkey migrants arriving in Greece if they do not apply for asylum or their claim is rejected.

Additionally, we consider Turkey to be a central partner in facing the migration crisis. It has to be emphasised that a crisis of such magnitude and a clearly global dimension has to be handled at the root of the problem, which is the Syrian war. As such, the EU has to recognise that cooperation with Turkey, as a potential close partner in the region, will be a crucial factor in addressing the source of the crisis. The effective European involvement, coordinated with our Turkish partners, in ensuring a diplomatic resolution of the military and humanitarian crisis in Syria, is a necessary step in addressing the current inflow of refugees, addressing the crisis which might potentially lead to the increasing disrespect for or even dissolution of the agreements of the Schengen Convention. Even more importantly, this solution directly addresses an enormous humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and, if successful, promises the resolution of a conflict which continuously threatens the lives of many civilians, forcing even more to leave their homes against their will and seek security in the inadequate conditions of refugee camps both in and outside of the region.

When considering relations with our Eastern Partnership countries, it is important to mention growing tensions between the EU and Russia linked to the Ukrainian crisis as well as the growing impact of anti-democratic forces throughout Europe. To Ukraine, the EU offered comprehensive support, amongst others, for implementation of the planned decentralisation. After more than 40 years since the Helsinki Agreement, there is a new strong need to work towards peace and stability on the European continent. A permanent division of Europe should be avoided and opponents should be brought around the same table. The S&D group is deeply concerned about the conflict among Eastern neighbors, and our group asks the European Union to find the appropriate solution for peacemaking and for finding the common ground to pave the way for a comprehensive political solution to the Ukrainian crisis, based on respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine. Particularly in the current crisis, we need dialogue more than ever and, hence, the S&D Group in the EP proposes these concrete steps:

- The removal from the sanction lists, of both Russia and the European Union, of all

members national Parliaments as well as the European Parliament.

- A free movement of people throughout Europe with visa facilitation and liberalisation. The Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament have consistently supported visa liberalisation for the Balkan countries as well as the participants of the Eastern Partnership program. As European Socialists, we will confront all forces in and outside of the EU undermining freedom and tolerance. The visa liberalisation with Kosovo, Ukraine, and Georgia would also increase the attractiveness of the EU for the populations of these countries, thus contributing to the reform processes destined to bring them closer to the EU.

Under international trade relations, the S&D group, aware of the great respect and harmony which has always characterised the relations between our Union and the United States, considers the crucial discussion on the possibility of reaching an agreement between the EU and US, namely the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which supposes the removal of non- rate related barriers and the definition of common safety, health, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) legislation; greater openness to foreign investment; and reciprocal facilities for participation in public procurement.

The S&D group asks the EU to strongly protect the values the Union stands on, including the precautionary principle, which ensures high levels of protection of our citizens. We propose to push for an agreement which ensures the strongest possible guarantees for workers' rights, leading social and environmental standards, high level of public services, and the removal of the obsolete dispute resolution mechanism between the state and investors. We advocate for this agreement in order to create jobs and economic growth in the EU, but emphasise that it should at the same time protect our values and the environment.

The S&D will not accept a "soft" TTIP, reducing our standards. Neither will we accept an unsatisfactory agreement reached under time pressure, and we believe that it is better to devote more time to the negotiation process if this helps to ensure a more favourable agreement.

Only an ambitious and progressive TTIP can lead to real economic benefits. Overall, the S&D group asks the European Commission to create proper tools, in order to promote the highest social participation so that it is not only the privileged categories of citizens whose interests are taken into consideration in the process of establishing the transatlantic trade consensus.

Furthermore, in terms of international trade relations, the S&D group recognises the fundamental importance of maintaining and developing new business partnerships between the EU and China, aware of the leading role of its economy in the global trade stream.

At the same time, we are conscious of the challenges that this relationship presents us, especially related to the violations of IPR legislation, and even more importantly the continuous breaking of workers' rights on the part of the Chinese government. Furthermore, we believe the EU should work to establish appropriate means to fight the dangerous dumping phenomenon, which deregulates the economies of weaker states and establishes an unfair disadvantage for international corporations. As such, we ask that the respect of original principles of our own trade system be emphasised in any agreement between the EU and China.

1.3 ECR's Entrance Statement

In 2015 more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe, sparking a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, creating division in the EU over how best to deal with resettling people. Many came through the Western Balkans and Greece after crossing the Greek-Turkish border and claimed asylum in European countries, mostly in Hungary, Austria and Germany. For the coming years, protecting Europe's external borders and fighting against illegal immigration must be one of the EU's main priorities.

We support and aim to mirror Hungary's border fences erection to control the influx of migrants, assuring our citizens a higher national security level and protecting our cultural heritage. Europe must promote effective controls on immigration coordinating and acting as a point of information exchange in order to prevent individual countries undertaking actions that may adversely affect other European countries. On the other hand, each Member State must have the power to decide whether immigrants are allowed to settle in their territory, according to their particular needs and capacities.

Therefore, a European quota system for immigrants must be very cautiously be applied, if it were to be accepted. In asylum policy, the EU and its Member States can and must do more to prevent people from becoming refugees through a coordinated effort, regulated by clear rules and fair procedures. Besides the introduction of a coherent visa policy, e.g. the Austrian Red-White-Red Card, to ensure the willing cooperation of the countries from where illegal migrants originate and transit, the EU must make a financial commitment to provide economical resources and practical assistance to accept and resettle asylum seekers in their region of origin. When it comes to managing migration, local and regional authorities are in the frontline: local governments must cooperate in the countries from where the refugees and

migrants come to increase stability, jobs and investments.

Our work in areas such as stabilisation of the Middle East aims to build trust and achieve peace in this area by encouraging cooperation between Member States and our international partners in order to combat the rise of Islamic extremism, which is as much a threat overseas as it is to our security at home, and strongly supporting a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Cooperating with international partners, we want to achieve a secure and universally recognised Israel living alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian state. Long-term peace and stability in conflict areas must be secured through international actions to bring those responsible for the violence to justice and the promotion of political reforms in the Middle East as well as in North Africa and Eastern Neighbourhood countries.

Furthermore, the international community must continue to exert maximum diplomatic pressure on Syria, and on those countries, such as Russia, that have refused to suitably condemn the regime. On Russia itself, the Pussy Riot case is one of a growing number of concerning apparent abuses of the judicial system, following on from the Khodorkovsky case, which undermine the perception that Russia is governed by the rule of law.

We continue to promote human rights in the emerging democracies of the Arab Spring and in Eastern Europe, as well as in Africa, Central Asia and Burma, to support the work of human rights defenders and journalists in conflict areas, and promote the rights of persecuted religious and ethnic minorities.

TOPIC B – EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (ENP)

Building security in our neighbourhood has always been a strategic objective for the EU. This means that the EU should play an active role assisting its close neighbours to strengthen their democratisation process, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. By doing this, the cooperation between the EU and those countries will be improved and their partnership will extend to the political, economic and cultural spheres as well as in the security field. The European Neighbourhood Policy refers to the relations with the countries in the Balkans, the ex-soviet countries in Eastern Europe, the countries of the Southern Caucasus and the wider Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Our members are actively working with the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) in order to bring them closer to the EU promoting the rule of law and enhancing people-to-people contacts, although there are concerns on the implementation of these developments in some of these countries. We also support democratic opposition and human rights defenders active in Belarus. Overall, the ECR group will continue to play an active role in ensuring that EU enlargement continues to advance with all EU applicant countries

fulfilling the criteria for EU membership at the economic, political and social levels.

Most importantly, the recent events in Ukraine and Crimea, and Russia's role in them, should keep the EU alert concerning its relations with Moscow. MEP Monica Macovei (ECR), coming from Romania, has repeatedly stated that the EU should hold a tougher stance against Russian expansionism and support all these young democracies in Eastern Europe to safeguard their democratisation path and independence. For this we should take the recent developments under consideration, since the EU leaders of the 28 Member-States will have to decide by the end of July 2016 whether to prolong the sanctions on the Russian economy, which hamper Russian imports into the EU and Russian banks' access to European markets.

Also, we propose that the Commission should develop a holistic approach to development policy and humanitarian aid with third countries, with the objectives in the long run measured in terms of political stabilisation, peace and tangible economic results. Any help provided via the ENP, should be associated with increased accountability and transparency mechanisms in the partner countries in order to ensure that they have the capacity to absorb and spend the funds in an efficient and meaningful way. The Commission should, therefore, take any necessary measures to ensure efficient mechanisms of monitoring and oversight of spending of EU assistance in the ENP countries, including scrutiny mechanisms by the civil society.

As it concerns the regional security, we believe that NATO, given its transatlantic importance, should remain the cornerstone of our defence and security policy, and not an EU army or other military structures that would only undermine our links with our international defence partners and result in unnecessary overlapping of costs and resources. We would like to bring to the attention of the fellow MEPs that both Sweden and Finland, EU member-states but non-NATO members, explore the possibilities for a further collaboration with NATO, in order to respond to the increased Russian military actions in the Baltic Sea and aggression in the region.

Finally, we remain watchful to discuss and criticise constructively the updated section on the European Neighbourhood Policy in the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy Agenda that will be presented by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the June 2016 European Council meeting.

1.4 ALDE's Entrance Statement

(1) The ALDE party expresses its consolidated support towards the ENP South-European

Union approach, as an initiative that brings both stability and closer relations between the Union and the Maghrebi – Middle Eastern states. However, we cautiously watch over the deterioration of Human Rights values in Egypt, as well as the critical situation in Libya and Syria.

Considering the relations with our Turkish counterparts, we strongly believe that there is an immense field for approach to be done, but our support should not be taken for granted. The Cyprus question and the seemingly suppressive policy of the State against the freedom of expression, gender equality and the right for equal representation, concern us a lot. A secular - and under the rule of Law- Turkish Republic is one of our most valuable probable partners.

With regards to the eastern and southern neighbours, the ALDE group is of the opinion that we should seek to not only remedy the relations which have grown strained in recent times but also maintain current relationships. We express optimism for Belarus and Ukraine's progress towards modernisation and support initiatives to strengthen our relationship with these countries. The continued annexation by Russia of Crimea and Sevastopol is a cause of concern but in light of recent worsening of civil rights in Russia, we believe that discussions should recommence with regards to the common space on freedom, security and justice. For candidates such as Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia we support the continuation of our European integration programmes aimed at improving the political and economic situation.

Acknowledging the current choice of immigration route taken by asylum seekers, we underline that we should take great care in our relationship with the countries of the Balkans that it may not be adversely affected by the ongoing humanitarian crisis taking place in the Middle East nor cause a disturbance to the progress achieved by them already towards respecting universal freedoms, the rule of law and human rights as well as the economic balance which will benefit their citizens.

(2) Considering the topic of most importance, we cannot refrain from pointing at the refugee crisis and its impact. During 2015 and early 2016, our Union accepted an unprecedented flow of migrants, coming mainly from the war ravaged countries of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, through a hazardous route passing from Turkey to the Greek Islands, Mainland and the Balkans. We believe that by addressing the issue, no such thing as the “Balkan corridor” closure will ever happen again, while at the same time our Continent will be able to manage occurring similar situations in a better and more humane manner. Faithful to the enlightening

ideas we most of all adhere to, we underline that Europe is the homeland of everyone that shares our ideals of peace, freedom, prosperity and the Rule of Law.

(3) With a mind to not adding economic strain to our members with smaller economies or cause political strife within the states currently managing waves of right-wing extremism, the ALDE group supports the idea of quotas for accepting asylum seekers which are inversely proportional to our members' GDPs, the funds for which would be obtained by quotas directly proportional to the members' GDPs.

We believe that in this way, the smaller economies will not be under undue strain while tackling this humanitarian crisis and neither will the core members face political backlash. It is of utmost importance that the PROXY committee clarifies and establishes a guidance framework for principles regarding what an asylum seeker is entitled to in the process of their application for refugee status and what should happen once this status is confirmed or denied – with particular focus on acceptance of asylum seekers with valid reasons for departure only and emphasis on the duration of this entitlements as directly related to the situation which caused their displacement and the possible obligation to return once this situation is resolved.

Our opinion is that the establishment of these guidelines will prove useful for the appropriate spending of the funds allocated towards this humanitarian crisis and also dispel the notion that asylum seekers are better received in some member states than in others. By respecting the right to freedom of movement, we believe that these guidelines should also make clear that the benefits which refugees should receive will be granted to them as if they were European Citizens.

Thus, by promoting the migrants integration in our societies, we strongly believe that every part of this scheme is to be benefitted. Voluntary Demographic, Social and Cultural assimilation of migrants is not only going to boost the anemics growth our economies face, but is also set to remind the globe that the EU remains the most crucial promoter of Liberal, humane and progressive values in the world.

1.5 GUE/NGL's Entrance Statement

GUE/NGL wishes to propose the following to the PROXY committee:

Human Rights

Turkey must meet all the Copenhagen criteria and obligations towards the EU and all

its Member states before any further discussions on Turkey's ascension can be held.

Future trade agreements must include strategic plans for the promotion of health and safety standards and improving the wages and working conditions of working partners. It is recommended that the wages and working conditions be equivalent to a new EU wide minimum wage.

Trade unions should also be promoted and protected in future trade agreements to ensure decent working and living conditions. At a basic level the trade agreement must include the prevention of the blocking of trade unions.

International Development

EU agriculture, trade and energy policy must take international development into account. The right to food, safe drinking water, energy, food sovereignty and the protection of natural resources should be recognised globally as fundamental rights. We recommend a percentage of the funds devoted towards each policy must be set aside for development in these areas.

We also believe in the right to produce or import essential medicines without having to pay rights to pharmaceutical companies. We propose that pharmaceutical companies must surrender rights to medicinal formulas. In exchange the pharmaceutical companies must be incentivised using tax breaks and research funding. Medicines must also not be sold for more than 10% of cost.

We are opposed to all international trade agreements that are shaped by the interests of big business. Therefore, all trade deals worth more than 50 million Euros must be approved by a EU committee. The committee will approve deals that demonstrate provisions for sustainable development, access to education, improving local health, and support fighting major diseases (Malaria or AIDs for example).

Peace

The EU should threaten suspension of trade agreements with both Israel and Palestine until they can reach a just and peaceful two-state solution.

The EU should commit to ending plans for an EU armed force and disarmament within and outside Europe should be central to the EU's plans. The EU should have a civilian perspective strictly separated from NATO structures, recognised by EU statute.

2. SOLID Committee's Entrance Statements

La Commissione SOLID aveva competenza e mandato di dibattere le questioni riguardanti giustizia, cittadinanza, strumenti di solidarietà e welfare tra gli stati membri dell'Unione. Questi Entrance Statement riflettono le posizioni iniziali di ciascun gruppo parlamentare su queste tematiche.

2.1 EPP's Entrance Statement

Our Parliamentary Group decided that creation of the European Civil Code (ECC) in nowadays it is extremely urgent and necessary issue. Due to the fact that this ECC can significantly increase harmonisation of private law within the European Union Member States, as well as, increase the level of solidarity among member states. Its aim is to integrate the Member States legally in one unified law field and provide the comprehensive manner of dealing with key areas of the private law. The idea of creating a unified European Civil Code was born together with the creation of the European Union to unite not only the Member States into the European Union for economic reasons. However, also to unify its legal systems, thereby, the cooperation in various areas in the Member States would be performed in a clear legal adequate way. Moreover, the citizens of the Member States will have unambiguous accessibility to the same laws and rights while conducting business or any other activity regarding legal matters within the EU.

However, the idea has arisen into a project that has got as many opponents as supporters. Objectively, one can think that since the EU was created to unify the Member States so it is natural that also laws should be unified. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the size of the undertaking of implementation and unification of the laws from each and one of the Member States into one ECC will be enormous. But at the same time legislation that is created by the EU are regularly implemented into the legal orders of all the Member States on a daily basis through regulations, directives, and other legal acts, so taking it into consideration it might sound reasonable and obvious to create ECC. Thus, bind the Member States stronger and more permanently.

From the political point of view, the creation of the ECC would bring an increasingly globalised economy and the picture of united the EU would emerge again with strong solidarity among member states. In comparison to the current situation and challenges that EU

is facing nowadays. That kind of progress in being united might be found as quite useful and desired by the EU as a whole.

Creation of the ECC would also bring a strong reduction of the significance of national borders since all the Member States would have the same laws and legal policies. It would be a milestone in the legal harmonisation of the EU Member States and facilitation for the EU citizens, especially while we take into consideration reasons of the development of welfare which might find in the ECC. Moreover, it will decrease the cost regarding hiring someone that would know the way of performing legal actions and have knowledge of foreign law while performing transboundary transactions. With the adoption of the ECC, we will have a possibility to perfect the internal market into a single unit by removing all the differences and any possible further obstacles, and abolishing the internal fragmentation that can be leading to the inefficiency. Thus, such steps will allow achieving great solidarity among the EU members states, because they will be all interested in the appropriate functioning of new European Civil Code.

Thus, our proposal to the Parliament as a first step which must be adopted, it is a creation of ad hoc working groups. Their primary aim is to consolidate the EU's civil legislation and make a comprehensive report of main differences among member states of the EU. Because we have countries that have a civil legal system but we also have common law countries. Since exists a huge difference between common law and civil law, in a way of thinking about law, in general, we need to have a clear understanding of such issue. As a result, with necessary information of main differences, we will be able then to continue to develop the ECC.

2.2 S&D's Entrance Statement

The purpose of this document is to determine the position and engagement of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament towards a real Progressive European Social Policy, as the basis for a prosperous and sustainable Social Europe. This paper primarily focus on the issues related to the competences of poverty, inequality and unemployment in the European Union. Problems regarding the European Social Policy are closely related to the lack of an efficient Social Agenda in Europe and lack of the supports for generation of further social progress originated before the start of the economic and financial crisis. Poverty and social exclusion are inherent social problems in all EU countries affecting more than 120 million people. In Europe, there is considerable income

disproportions and 17% are living below the poverty line. Due to the economic crisis, the sustainability of the social protection system is undermined and the gap of social inequality is widening each year. Nowadays, the EU is facing high unemployment rates that contributed to the deterioration of the social problems. With the purpose of eliminating such dangers a number of the far-reaching reforms were introduced. Target 2020 aims to improve the social situation caused by economic crisis in the EU, combat poverty and inequality, and guarantee sustainable and inclusive growth. Yet, today the EU countries are far from reaching the 2020 target strategy.

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats are deeply concerned with the European Social Policy and call of the collective actions to combating poverty and creating mechanisms that will guarantee fair and reliable employment. The EU has developed social protection systems based on fundamental rules and common values in order to protect their working citizens from unexpected situations, such as disabilities, health problems, losing a close relative or parenting issues. Furthermore, the principle of solidarity has been adopted to benefit from the advantages and overcome the disadvantages of social, economic and political environments within Europe. The EU employed itself to foster solidarity and civil rights within the community in terms of working rights, regulating trade unions, new welfare strategies and a collective principle for social protection. EU agencies have been also collectively working on developing national strategies for member states to reduce the rate of poverty, encourage effective health and social care systems.

In order to reach the 2020 targets, political action is needed at the European and national levels to support the rights of the workers and guarantee a decent wage. We can no more tolerate what we could call “unfair competition” among workers coming from different Countries of the EU. The difference between wages is spreading a polarization of standards of living and is undermining the pursuit of a decent life for European citizens. The European Commission noted that “it is in each member’s common and self-interest to be able to cushion economic shocks well, to modernise economic structures and welfare systems, and make sure that citizens and businesses can adapt to, and benefit from, new demands, trends and challenge. It is equally in each member’s interest that all others do so at a similar speed”. The status quo is increasing the gap between workers and the austere policies are only making the situation to get worse. On the other hand private companies are taking advantage of this gap, leaving richest member states, creating a market distortion and assuring the same profits (or increasing them) at the expense of a stagnation of salaries. A more equitable social policy on

wages is needed also to stimulate the growth of our economies. We must stand together and guarantee the same rights to all citizens. The paradigm we need to follow should be “equal job, equal pay, equal rights”. We cannot deal with the challenges of globalization if we cannot guarantee a decent standard of life, and therefore a decent wage, to each European worker. The Socialists and Democrats hereby propose an European minimum wage, achieved not with equality of earnings, but with a balanced purchasing power parity (PPP).

National minimum wages vary widely across EU member States. For instance, in Bulgaria this equals EUR 215, whereas in Luxembourg the minimum wage is almost 9 times higher at EUR 1.923. If including candidate countries Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Montenegro, and by converting all EU member’s currencies into Euros, it becomes possible to divide the countries where minimum wage is in place into three distinct groups. The first where minimum wages fail to reach EUR 500 formed by candidates Albania, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and members Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia and Poland. The second group where earnings vary from EUR 500 to EUR 1,000 is composed by Greece, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia and Malta. Finally, the third – where wages surpass EUR 1,000 consists of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and Ireland.

This simplistic comparison is somewhat unfair if not taking into consideration the actual cost of living in those countries. With EUR 5 in Bulgaria one can purchase more consumer goods as if the same EUR 5 were to be spent in Luxembourg. We therefore understand that by simply creating a wage line among EU states, one would be creating an unrealistic divide. With this in mind we, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, propose that an average line be drawn from the PPP of every state. This allows the 1:9 ratio of wages to be reduced to a 1:4 ratio in PPP terms. The idea here proposed is not to eradicate with the ratio disparities as this would destabilise the economies of most countries, especially with regards to inflation – but rather – to eliminate the first quarter of it creating three well-defined groups where the poorest can also offer basic living standards to their population. From the perspective that current minimum wages vary from 445PPP in Romania to 1,597PPP in Luxembourg, we propose a minimum wage line where 600PPP is adopted as the minimum standard. This would benefit the following candidate and member states: Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Estonia and Slovakia – thus creating a large group of lower, yet fairly-paid societies, followed by two

groups or richer states.

We, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats understand the challenges implicated to this proposal as many of the said economies are very fragile. We therefore propose a gradual relaxation of taxes in those countries. The amount of taxes on Production and Imports would be calculated in direct perspective to the PPP of the said country and the tax reductions are to be re-established every year according to the PPP growth of every country until they reach the minimum proposed of 600PPP per full-time worker, per calendar month. This would stimulate investment in lower-ranked countries, generating jobs and growth to such societies. In the other hand this would help create stronger economies in the lowest sector of the European divide reducing the risks of economic collapses such as the one recently experienced by Greece. We, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats strongly believe that this could benefit the whole of the EU and welcome the distinct viewpoints of the various groups that comprise this parliament in order to turn this proposal into reality.

2.3 ECR's Entrance Statement

International protection of human rights is essential in crisis situations where states suspend basic freedoms and frequently commit massive violations of human rights treaties. In this perspective, the European Commission should look at all gross and reliably attested violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (not just patterns of such violations).

The EU needs a firm hand from the European Commission on world politics in order for all parties to be able to work together.

The European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), as every parliamentary group designed to the building of the “ European Home “, is behaving like a sister with her brother: take it slow! Otherwise, we might run the risk to be just blow smoke.

Current problem with solidarity, citizenship, justice and welfare among EU

On 8 March 2016, the European Commission proposed a review of the Posted Workers Directive, which regulates people employed in one member state, but are sent to temporarily work in another.

The EU Commission presented a statement to MEPs on revisions to 1996 Posted Workers Directive. It says that EU workers who are posted to another EU nation for up to two years should be entitled to minimum pay rates in the country where they are sent. Therefore, it

avoids abuse, fraud and social dumping, the practise of undermining local market conditions by cheap labour.

Foremost, the revision of the 1996 EU law has sparked controversy in the past, as the 28-country bloc struggles to reconcile the freedom to offer cross-border services, a cornerstone of the internal market, with clear differences in wages and levels of social protection. An average hour of work costs an employer €40 in Denmark and €39 in Belgium, but only €3.80 in Bulgaria, €4.60 in Romania and €8.40 in Poland, according to Eurostat data for 2014.

Besides, the European Conservatives and Reformists group employment spokesman Anthea McIntyre has argued that revisiting the Posting of Workers directive is a mistake that risks adding more uncertainty and red tape to businesses. “We talk about better regulation but then steam ahead with a revision of the Posting of Workers directive before we’ve even implemented the last law, which itself was meant to implement the law before that!” said Miss McIntyre.

To conclude, if this continues what could happen ?

Xenophobic rejection by workers from other countries. Consequently, the Directive could generate a risk at some point: the receiving countries could tighten regulation against these posted workers, spelling the end of the international market.

Main ECR Priorities

The current Directives has been undermined by a series of court judgements, and a revision is absolutely necessary to re-establish the fundamental principle of equal pay for equal work. This is the interests of all workers, especially posted workers and honest companies. Indeed, remuneration is necessary for the protection of workers.

For this reason, I am fully behind the ECR members whom believe in the common sense approach that would have been to wait for the latest update in the law to be implemented before rushing ahead with a new proposal.

2.4 ALDE’s Entrance Statement

(1) Which is the opinion your Parliamentary Group has on the possible new instruments of solidarity among EU member states and new welfare tools for EU?

There is enough political resistance at a national level within the EU Member states when it comes to accepting asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons for humanitarian

reasons. Alde calls on the EU to focus on its commitment for guaranteeing the principles of solidarity and responsibility-sharing and to stress the useful role that local and regional authorities can play in the creation of safe and legal migration ways into Europe, in the integration of migrants and in the prevention of irregular migration. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe has for a long time advocated a common and central migration system which could replace the current Dublin system. Furthermore it attempts to implement the European Blue Card for legal migration

(2) Within this topic, which is the most urgent issue you think is needed to be discussed?

Without a doubt, the most urgent issue within the topic of the common European asylum policy is the current refugee crisis. So far, the present asylum system that is based on Dublin Regulation that have not proved itself effective and put additional pressure on the member states with external borders. Under the conditions of asylum policies that do not work, uncontrolled influx of refugees may cause a severe damage to unity and solidarity within the European Union. Moreover, some states have already resorted to practices of closing their borders and adopting the policies that violate human rights and freedoms. Therefore, urgent actions should be taken in order to manage the refugee crisis in an effective way, save the Schengen zone, and give the necessary protection to the people fleeing the conflict and seek for international protection. Hence, ALDE Parliamentary Group considers refugee crisis as the most urgent issue that that demands for immediate effective solution.

(3) Which solution you propose and which kind of Proposal the Parliament should adopt on this issue?

ALDE Parliamentary Group insists on a doption of the following urgent measures that will help to manage the refugee crisis and will contribute to creation of the balanced and effective common European asylum policy.

Firstly, it is necessary to create a European Rapid Refugee Emergency Force (ERREF) based on the article 78.3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. These temporary measures will assist member states in management of the EU external borders and improve living conditions of refugees both in Turkey and in the EU.

Secondly, the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) should be established on the basis of Frontex. To do that, the budget of the Agency should be multiplied by five (to 600 million). The states that do not support this measure should leave the Schengen, while Member States that have external borders but are not members of the Schengen, should be able to contribute and benefit from the EBCG.

Thirdly, it is important to upgrade hot spots to reception centres managed by the ERREF and later by the EBCG. Considering the fact that the hot spots do not function in practice due to the numerous influx of refugees, they should be elaborated and function as a transit zone until the status of the migrant is assessed. There, refugees should be fingerprinted, health-checked, security assessed, and assisted with the necessary paper-work.

Fourthly, it is crucial to replace the Dublin Regulation with a new single European Asylum Procedure. The new system should be based on a fair sharing of responsibility between Member States. According to the new system, the country of first arrival criteria should be removed from the Dublin regulation and replaced with a fair and mandatory distribution mechanism between Member States. This relocation mechanism should be based on objective criteria such as population and GDP. Moreover, any integration measures that form part of the European Asylum Procedure should involve swift access to the labour market.

Then, it is necessary to set up a functioning European Blue Card. It will allow migrants to cover EU's needs for skilled and unskilled workforce. The new EU Blue Card needs to be a realistic equivalent to the US Green Card to attract innovation and businesses and to facilitate start-ups hiring non-EU workers. To do so, a centralised data collection system needs to be created.

Finally, ALDE insists on creation of European Peace Plan plus Marshall Plan for the region. Hence, the European efforts at the Geneva talks should intensify and give full support to the democratic Syrian opposition forces. In addition, the EU must work to engage the US and the international community to develop a coherent strategy to defeat ISIS.

Hence, ALDE Parliamentary Group thinks that these actions will help to create a comprehensive European approach to migration and manage the refugee crisis effectively.

2.5 GUE/NGL's Entrance Statement

(1) Which is the opinion your Parliamentary Group has on the possible new instruments of solidarity among EU Member states and new welfare tools for EU?

Over the last two decades the territorial units of sub-national level have increased their role and importance in many areas of social protection: from health care to social services, from active employment policies for inclusion. This trend is linked to two macro-factors. The first is endogenous and is connected to the growing difficulties of central governments in managing social policies on the financial and organisational level, however, in the presence of

new guidelines and neo-localist movements. The second factor is the European integration, which has gradually relaxed the "security belts" around the regulative national states and provided incentives and resources capable of activating processes of "region-building", largely focused on its territorial differentiation of policies. The results of these processes are open for now. On the one hand, the re-regionalisation could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection instruments; on the other hand, it could trigger centrifugal dynamics, if not real, "deconstruction" of national welfare systems: a worrying scenario for its social and political consequences.

(2) Within this topic, which is the most urgent issue you think is needed to be discussed?

Faced with a new set of needs and social demands, then, the traditional welfare systems have revealed the inadequacy of their facilities, continuing to provide very generous benefits for the risk protection that no longer generate the conditions needed for large groups of the population (such as the withdrawal from work) and neglecting, however, the new risk situations (featuring, for example, the dependent elderly and single mothers). This weakness of the social security institutions is particularly marked in continental and Mediterranean systems, in which the increased institutionalisation of social insurance has led to a sharp demarcation between included and excluded from the performance benefits.

One of the nodes of the bottom of the welfare reform strategies is the choice between universal or selective setting of public welfare policies. According to the selective setting, the provision of social benefits should be conditional on the economic situation of the beneficiaries, while the universalist criterion provides for the extension of benefits to the whole community, regardless of income and balance sheet conditions of individuals. The international policy debate, since the 80s, has dominated the selective principle as inspiring criterion of reform measures; Following this line, for example, they were made in Italy certain measures in the field social security and welfare, providing for the delivery of transfers conditioned on compliance with income limits (think of the discipline of family allowances). Subsequently, interventions such as the 1995 pension reform and the introduction Indicator of the economic situation, in 1998, they accepted the final statement of the selection criteria as a guiding principle of social policies

European social protection systems have different characteristics, reflecting the links between the methods of development of institutions and historical experiences, political and economic of the country. The various systems differ primarily with respect to the size and composition of public spending, to the institutional aspects, the types of services provided and the funding

mechanisms provided; consequently, social policy can be classified on the basis of the instruments used (transfers in cash or delivery of services), the rules of access (with proof, or less, of the conditions of need), the financing arrangements adopted (through general taxation or through social contributions) and organisational and management structure. Based on this categorisation it is possible to identify some common lines of evolution of social security systems and identify some relatively homogeneous macro-areas. The literature of social policy distinguishes four models of welfare state: the Social Democratic model (or Scandinavian), the liberal model (or Anglo-Saxon), the corporate model (or continental) and the Mediterranean model. And 'necessary to define a universal model or several models in relation to the reference area?

(3) Which solution you propose and which kind of Proposal the Parliament should adopt on this issue?

- In support of family responsibilities policies, providing financial support to families with children. In this area it stands out transfers to households and maternity benefits, intended to offset the loss of income of the mother abstention from work;
- Explicit policies aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion. The main reference, in this case, is to support instruments of last resort income;
- Pensions type of care, granted to borrowers at a disadvantage and / or elderly people (disabled, elderly without or with insufficient contributory career careers to have an excess of the minimum old-age pension, the beneficiary families of contributions for the rental of ' housing, ...).

3. NEXT Committee's Entrance Statements

La Commissione NEXT aveva competenza e mandato di dibattere del futuro dell'educazione, dell'innovazione scientifica e tecnologica del continente. Gli Entrance Statement riflettono le posizioni iniziali e le proposte di ciascun gruppo parlamentare sul tema.

3.1 EPP's Entrance Statement

Education, science, technology and innovation are areas of crucial importance for the future prosperity of the European Union. Nowadays, Education is highly bound to technology,

languages and multicultural issues and the EPP considers it necessary to ensure a quality educational policy is being provided in all the member countries. In a society like ours, any educational programme should take into account the needs of globalisation and its effects of the students. Firstly, they can gather knowledge more easily from various sources and that is why the focus has to be put on developing their critical thinking skills. Moreover, education has to instil values of citizenship and tolerance, while at the same time emphasising inclusion and accommodating any special needs of the students.

According to various scientific studies, Europe has attained significant achievements in science and technology. Such research and development efforts form an integral part of the European economy. Europe has been the home of some of the most prominent researchers in various scientific disciplines, notably physics, mathematics, chemistry and engineering. Scientific research in Europe is supported by industry, by the European universities and by several scientific institutions. The raw output of scientific research from Europe consistently ranks among the world's best. This is exemplified by the work of The European Organisation for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, which is a European research organisation that operates the largest particle physics laboratory in the world. In the last 20 years it has made important discoveries in particle physics, resulting in a deeper understanding of the field, and setting a foundation for the incorporation of this knowledge into technologies used in daily life. However, it is also important to remember the negative consequences of advancements in technology. Previous centuries' dependence on fossil fuels had resulted in devastating ramifications on the world's environment. Global warming, the sea-level rise, and extreme weather will reduce the amount of habitable space, causing massive deaths and migration. It is crucial to remember that with the introduction of new technologies come unforeseeable consequences, both in the environmental and socio-political sphere.

Considering innovation and technology, European Union's future is directly connected to its power to innovate. This quality is of paramount importance, especially when considering European industries. Industry accounts for 80% of Europe's exports, and as such, it is one of the largest investors in private sector research and development, with around 65% of investments coming from manufacturing. Innovation is also crucial to remaining competitive, as studies show that companies that prioritise it have the highest increase in turnover. Furthermore, 79% of companies that introduced at least one innovation since 2011 experienced a 25% increase of their turnover. However, the European Union continues to lag behind other competitors, like the United States. The most innovative companies of the world,

like Google or Tesla, are more often than not American. Whole regions are designated to be incubators of new ideas, which can be exemplified by the culture and entrepreneurship present in places like the Silicon Valley. Furthermore, foreign companies often recruit the most promising, highly educated and creative citizens of the EU, resulting in a large scale brain-drain. Consequently, the EPP believes that boosting new methods, products, and ideas through innovation enhancing regulations is of crucial importance. This can be approached through tackling three general areas. Firstly, education has to be improved by devising and implementing teaching methods that promote creativity, imagination, critical thinking and digital skills necessary for work with new technologies. Secondly, processes that challenge the commonly accepted status quo should be encouraged rather than hindered and obstructed. This can be achieved by introducing regulation that provides incentives for people to do so, through reducing the administrative burden for new businesses, and providing opportunities for people who can bring forth new and better goods and services. Finally, regulation easing technological transfers from university to industry, can facilitate the incorporation of new ideas through acquisition, and patenting. Patents encourage innovation by allowing new inventors to profit from their discoveries. At the same time, they improve the allocation of resources as they encourage rapid experimentation and ex-post conveyance of knowledge across various companies.

As far as technology is involved, the EPP has a strong stance on the issues concerning informative technologies and digitalisation of Europe. The EPP welcomes any efforts for digitalising Europe and contributing to the upcoming European Digital Single Market. In order to put an emphasis on the importance of this topic, the EPP has published a policy paper called 'Boosting eSkills – decoding its potential' which proposed how to help complete the digital transformation of Europe, which could potentially bring hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions in profit. It is expected that the completion of the European Digital Single Market will increase the EU GDP by 4% by 2020. This is why the EPP has also decided to launch a campaign, which is supposed to encourage member states to invest in the digital skills of their citizens in order to minimise the future gap on the digital job market. Some of the proposals were meant to encourage private companies to help citizens acquire e-skills; encourage women, children and youth to actively join ICT; integrate e-skills into primary and secondary education, as well as standardise Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and grant students with ECTS points for their completion; to heed to and to adopt the recommendations of the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DIGICOMP), etc. This way, the EPP puts its

hopes in technology and ICT in particular in order to help strengthen the economies and provide more growth, prosperity and integration for the EU in the nearest future.

However given the socioeconomic climate of our times the EPP believes that Youth unemployment is one of the most urgent issues concerning Europe. In some regions in Europe, almost 50% of young people are unemployed. But there is proof that the necessary skills to start up businesses and companies could be acquired at school. The subjects finance, economics and the business environment should be part of school curricula and should be accompanied by mentoring, career guidance as well as practical experience. A sense for initiative and entrepreneurship needs to involve fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set characterised by initiative, creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives.

Increased use of digital resources within the education systems is important because it enables young people to absorb new knowledge in an innovative way. In Europe, data shows that going online is a part of children's activities from a very young age. The use of new technologies allows learning in a variety of environments, making it easier for students to cooperate while at the same time enabling the learning process to be more adapted to the individual. In addition, the large increase in the number of educational programs and other educational resources that are available online for free can help ensure quality education for young people, which is extremely important given the high rate of unemployment among the youth.

3.2 S&D'Entrance Statement

One of the pillars of the European social democratic party is achieving equality amongst citizens of member countries. And seek to carry out socio-economic reforms that favor social class workers. Also, we try to double the budget for research, since it is our belief it is essential that we move forward towards a better future. Another idea proposed is the use of renewable energies. We need to respect and take care of the environment, and we think this is a good way to start doing it. Regarding education, we want to encourage students to apply for Erasmus scholarships as a good opportunity to be in contact with a different culture and language. More particularly:

Education field

Once each country is responsible for the innovations that result but also for the development of its citizens, it is very important to pay special attention to educational programs and general education as the foundation of development. A good educational system that includes schools, institutes and universities, must provide a good structure of learning, and teaching for children, and students. The technology as an aid to teaching and learning, gives the opportunity to students to develop many of their skills, to communicate faster with each other and give them all the information directly and in conjunction with images and animation videos. It may be difficult for many countries to provide money for new systems markets, but through these kids will go to new knowledge paths which would give them the opportunity to learn through interaction with various aspects of life. Furthermore, an extra future "tool" for education could be teamwork. The skill of working well with other people is the key that opens doors in the labor market. For years, colleges have been ignoring the power of teamwork and the achievements that could not have been made without it. Cooperative learning is the heart of problem based learning. Group work gives the opportunity to students to share thoughts and ideas and through their collaboration to develop both their knowledge and entrepreneurial and social competences. Working with other students in the framework of the year of school including the University gives prospects in afterward human life and relations with others.

Research and Innovation

Today there's no way that any country alone or any scientist alone could do excellent research and innovation. Excellent research is about collaboration. Einstein was the sole author of his papers", but the recent paper announcing the detection of gravitational waves "had more than 1,000 international authors" and the first Higgs Boson paper "had over 5,000".

Our effectiveness and credibility rests upon the quality of our research output, our professionalism, and our respect for the highest standards of ethics. This requires a rigorous smart regulation agenda, respecting subsidiarity and proportionality and devoting our attention to where we can bring clear added value through our research.

The big breakthroughs that will contribute to Europe's knowledge economy – and to solving global challenges – will not be from one person, or one university or one nation. They will be global. That's what we mean about European science, that European science is a benefit that goes beyond the amount of money [in EU research programmes]. It's a very important amount of money, but it goes beyond that because it's about the network effects...That's why

science has to be a European endeavour, a global endeavour.” More broadly in terms of the European exchanges created by EU programmes, the Erasmus+ student mobility programme is of major importance. To thrive in the information economy we need to be open to the world, we need to be innovative, and we need to be building academic partnerships with our close neighbours, not turning our backs on them.

Only last year, a group of leading international linguists, wanted accessibility to their research results to be independent of expensive commercial publishers. So what did they do? They left the editorial boards of their academic journals and embarked on a new venture. They found an open access publisher that could make their dream of low-cost open access into a viable reality. So, instead of asking ourselves how to stop the unstoppable... Let's ask ourselves how we're going to make openness work for us.

Science

Imagine you are living in Europe in the year 2030. What does your society look like, where do you live and what occupies your time? Over the next 15 years, change will not only continue; it will be accelerated by technological possibilities and the growing interconnections between science and society. For policy-makers in Europe, scientific, engineering and technological innovations offer opportunities to improve life for European citizens and provide benefits for sustainable development worldwide. Cross-disciplinary and integrated foresight thinking is essential to prepare for many of the possible futures we face and to manage the accompanying risks. We emphasise the plurality of possible futures, because it is important to remember that the future we get and the way we will be able to address tomorrow's challenges will be shaped by our actions today. Science for health and medical care: In a few years, 20% of the European population will be over 65 years old, with a resulting increase in diseases such as dementia, diabetes, arthritis and cancer. The rapid evolution of antibiotic resistant bacteria means that simple bacterial infections that are now treated with common antibiotics, will again become life-threatening. This already causes a large number of deaths amongst those whose immune systems are compromised. Science for Environment, climate and energy: Future worldwide settlements will be affected by demographic change and environmental conditions. Globally, more than 50% of people live in cities and the UN predicts that around two thirds of the global population will be urbanised by 2050. In contrast, in certain parts of the industrialised world (such as in former East Germany), cities are shrinking due to a population decline or migrations caused by economic

We the Young People of Europe

recession, challenging the economic viability of public infrastructures. Mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants will compete with each other on a global scale and consume and emit on a massive scale; shaping such cities to reduce their ecological impact will be a challenge. Anthropogenic global warming, intensified land use, significant sea-level rise, extreme weather and reduced precipitation in the subtropics will render many settlements unsustainable, and eventually uninhabitable.

We think the most urgent issue to discuss is education. It is important that we establish a common European basis, so get equal opportunities between countries.

Moreover, the entrance of immigrants and their children in European countries and their integration into these raises many problems and this is an issue that needs immediate solution. An issue that have to be addressed is the education and their integration and mainly their second generation. The fact that they do not know the native language of the country and the habits and manners , constitutes an obstacle to join it, and particularly in educational system. First of all, it is important to inform indigenous and children of every country for coexistence and rights of these people and the same be done with immigrants . On the other hand, is useful to be sent voluntary teachers in areas where are many immigrants in order to start some learning programs in domestic language and culture. More generally, volunteering can be very useful in the case of refugees because it incurred by each Member less expensively while it gives alongside opportunities for learning and integration of these people.

Our proposals to the Parliament are:

Europe needs a common educational system. We must ensure that all citizens of the European Union have the same educational opportunities. This would be easier to achieve if all EU countries have the same educational curriculum.

Another issue we should point out is the need to know the different EU languages. In this way it should give more importance to languages. This would encourage employment opportunities within the Union.

3.3 ECR's Entrance Statement

The current policies and structures of the European Union, largely designed to meet the needs of the 1950s, make it unfit to meet the challenges of the 2050s. This must change.

Europe needs a new direction if it is to respect the rights of its member states and fulfill the expectations of their citizens. It needs a fresh approach that is not stuck in the past but embraces the changes needed to build a better future. It needs new policies to modernise the economy so its industries and business can be competitive in the global marketplace. It needs reform so it is able to generate jobs and prosperity in the century ahead.

The ECR is at the forefront of generating forward-looking policy proposals to design a European Union that can support its member states by focusing on areas where common action can offer added value to achieve shared goals. Unconstrained by out of date dogmas and an obsession with the past, the ECR seeks to develop new ideas that can change Europe for the better in a demanding international environment.

To this end, the ECR has established Policy Groups to develop new options for reform. On this website we will keep you updated about their progress and share with you their ideas for change. We very much hope you will join in the debate and contribute your own thoughts and suggestions about how the European Union should change to help its member states and their citizens thrive in the twenty-first century.

Current problems with education

A high quality education is still overly dependent on socio-economic factors and not open to all. In the context of the economic crisis, the youth unemployment rate in the EU is 23 per cent. At the same time, the OECD has found a significant gap between the skills of citizens and those that employers look for. Employers are not finding digital skills required by technological advances. The economic crisis has also forced countries to cut public spending. Even though education spending can help economic growth, over half of EU Member States have cut spending on education and training.

Main ECR Priorities

The ECR Group always keeps focus on European added value in the field of Culture and Education policies in the EU.

The European Parliament's Culture and Education committee is responsible for education, culture, youth, sport and the cultural and educational aspects of the EU's media policy. While we recognise that education policy is the sovereign domain of Member States, there is a great deal of benefit to be had in improving cooperation and the exchange of best practice between countries. For this reason we closely follow the implementation of the Bologna Process,

which is based on a declaration signed in 1999 that attempts to promote comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications. We believe that along with pursuing cooperation amongst signatory countries, (there are currently 47), the Bologna Process can positively contribute to improving skills and employability, and help students and higher education institutions to succeed in an increasingly competitive global environment.

The ECR Group has always supported mobility and exchange programs seeing in them a real added value for Europeans. The Erasmus+ Program offers opportunities to participants from education, training, youth and sport organizations to study, work, volunteer, teach and train abroad in other EU countries. Therefore overseeing the successful implementation of Erasmus+, with its seven year budget of €14.7 billion, is a key priority for the ECR's members. In the field of Culture the ECR Group tries to safeguard and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and to promote Europe's cultural heritage.

We promote facilities for the cultural and creative sector and better cooperation amongst artists and creators at European level. ECR Members also strive to balance the varying interests of improving access to culture whilst at the same time protecting the rights of authors. In today's society we face an evolving model of accessibility to cultural content, such as music and films online, and with it the need to put in place a legal system that reflects this emerging reality faced by consumers and rights holders.

3.4 ALDE's Entrance Statement

Education is one of the pillars that sustain our society, especially when it comes to the promotion of skills development, growth and job creation. Education is a vital instrument to tackle social inequalities, youth unemployment, and foster social inclusion. That is why we need Education to be included in the Europe 2020 strategy. We need a better regulated process for the recognition of higher education diplomas among the different countries. This is the only way to foster coordination among national agencies and evaluate, improve the quality of education in Europe. Furthermore, ALDE calls on the countries of the European Higher Education Area to implement the agreed reforms, and stresses the importance of guaranteeing the mutual recognition of academic degrees. The European Parliament recalls the European higher education area can become a reference of academic excellence worldwide. EU can bring important added value to national education strategies. An example is given by the extremely successful mobility programme. Cross-border mobility and

experience are essential to the functioning of the European labour market and will ultimately drive economic growth. Especially in times of austerity it is absolutely essential to continue investing ambitiously in human capital and improve the employability of young people. Student mobility is a key contributor to helping students find the most suitable education. Studying abroad can greatly contribute to acquiring additional skills valued by employers such as languages and flexibility. European Liberals and Democrats consider mobility in vocational education and training (VET) essential for ensuring personal development, improvement of language skills and employability. While most university students participate in exchange programmes, still only 1% of apprentices and other young people currently in professional training are involved in a mobility programme. ALDE report shall draw the Commission's and Member States' attention to the need to implement measures to foster mobility in vocational education, such as creating a one-stop shop to centralise information and to facilitate contacts among all actors involved in mobility programmes. Experience-oriented education and of course the learning and training mobility within it, incorporates inputs from the business environment and enables participants to react in a flexible way to the rapidly changing world. This becomes increasingly important since the labour market demands professional and real-world knowledge and skills. If adequately developed, VET can help talented youths and adults break out of unemployment and reach their full potential. Even amid the economic crisis, Europe is facing acute shortage of skilled labour. Parallel with the unemployment queues, an estimated 2 million unfilled jobs are available across Europe. While the problem has traditionally been linked to low-skilled jobs, filling jobs in high-skill sectors, such as engineering and IT, is also becoming increasingly challenging. European education and training systems need investment, updating and reform if the right skills for employability are to be delivered. The mismatch between education and skills and the demands of the labour market highlights the need for reform. Investment in education systems offers a practical approach to addressing the skills gap which is exacerbating the youth unemployment crisis. By 2020, 20% more jobs will require higher level skills, yet at present 70 million Europeans have low or no formal qualifications. These disparities must be tackled. We all see massive untapped and hidden potential across Europe. But it is very worrying that large gaps also exist between EU countries, Obviously, better collaboration, better sharing, and better utilisation of talent across the EU could be a real game-changer in the long term, as this will have a positive impact on growth, learning, jobs, and eventually Europe's competitiveness. The EU shall finally moves towards a common vocational education and

training. This initiative will enhance social cohesion and integration and will sustain innovation, growth and employment. The Commission has to ensure support to the Erasmus+ projects. This should be done by providing sufficient financial means and by broadening their capacity to provide mobility in VET programs. However, this program is not just about investing in education in other countries, thereby broadening the horizons of students. Erasmus clearly strengthens cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding, and enables young people to experience the very rich, colourful and beautiful mosaic of diversity in Europe. For these reasons we should highlight the importance of EU funding and European institutions' contributions to help Member States preserve and promote cultural heritage, while putting forward solutions to reach its full social, economic and environmental potential. Cultural heritage is a core element of our identity. In the midst of the current crisis of European identity and values, this report aims to put cultural heritage higher on the political agenda. We suggest some concrete changes in order to improve both the European policy in the field and the implementation of the European programmes and actions in relation to cultural heritage. To name just a few, the report calls for the designation of a European Year for Cultural Heritage as well as for the creation of a single EU Portal with information on European funding available for cultural heritage through the European programmes. The group of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) underlines the importance of supporting, protecting and promoting languages that are at risk of disappearing. When languages are lost, most of the knowledge that went with them gets lost. ALDE calls on Member States to propose action plans for the promotion of endangered languages based on shared good practices already available within a number of language communities in Europe. The variety of languages tells us a lot about the variety of ways in which we can approach and view issues. Each language is also essential to its native speakers as a source of identity. Languages deserve protection. Some 255 languages are spoken in Europe, half of which have a threatened status. Of these, 90 have been identified as seriously endangered or in a critical situation. These endangered languages include the Sami languages spoken in Northern Finland, for example, where we are working to ensure their survival by providing extra funding for Sami language primary school instruction, as well as for Sami media, including radio and TV. Endangered languages need to be effectively protected throughout the EU. The Basque language is in good health in the south of the Basque country, but is endangered in the Basque speaking areas of France. We propose concrete measures that will help to avoid such differences in cross border regions. In addition we will depoliticise the debate on the preservation and teaching of minority

languages. The European Parliament defends the basic rights of the people who speak these languages. It also calls on the EU to support teaching methodologies and early learning for these languages, thereby contributing to preserve and revitalise them. If the European Union wants to stay competitive vis à vis its main competitors, the European Union should raise the level of research and development (R&D) as quickly as possible. Furthermore, R&D can accelerate the EU's transition to an eco-efficient economy using substantially fewer fossil fuels. Transition to an eco-efficient economy. So far the Commission's consultation on the EU 2020 strategy provides no concrete proposals. The Commission must strive to make low carbon technology, and wind energy available to all countries by enhanced cooperation between universities, the Commission and business. With over 40% of CO2 emissions coming from inefficient buildings, zero-emitting buildings must be a priority. The Commissioner should explore the possibilities of allocating a higher level of structural funds towards improvements in the efficiency of buildings.

3.5 GUE/NGL's Entrance Statement

In the vision of GUE/NGL party, some of the ultimate goals of the European integration process are represented by the fight for more and better jobs and educational opportunities, for a respectful way to deal with our earth and its resources, for cultural exchange and diversity, for sustainable economic development and for equal rights for women and men.

The group is involved in several debates which deal with science, education, research and innovation.

High-quality education for all

Every child should have equal opportunities, that's why current educational systems need new impetus, "rethinking education". It is important to develop a social education system ensuring the right to public and free high-education to everyone with a collective investment for all because a child's future must not be determined by the origin, the financial situation, and the educational standard of its parents. In particular, education has a specific role not only in combating unemployment, but also in helping people to become active members of the society, developing their personal skills and social attitudes, and to participate in the ongoing changes and developments.

Students should be supported in the best possible way so that they can develop their personal

competences thanks to a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills and studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics should be encouraged.

Studying abroad thanks to the European mobility programme is very important in the individual process of growth, as well. As a matter of fact, comparative studies and research, carried out among students, reveal that all the participants demonstrate a gradual recognition and acceptance of difference in other cultures and a new objectivity about their own culture as a result of their experience.

Science

At the global level the GUE/NGL works for ambitious targets to tackle climate change and measures to help developing countries cope with global temperature increases. This is the most urgent issue that must be discussed. The world's scientists have given their starkest warning yet that a failure to cut greenhouse-gas emissions will bring devastating climate changes within a few decades.

Many hundreds of environmental organizations all over the world call for an end to the carbon market, arguing that alternative solutions exist and can be implemented now. Not only does the carbon market fail to drive reduction of greenhouse gases, it is also in itself an obstacle to reductions and decreased dependence on fossil fuels. As everyone knows, natural resources are finite and they must not be wasted, even if our future depends on wind power, wave power and solar energy. That's why renewable resources play an important role in our life.

Individuals and communities across the world should work together in order to improve transport sustainability and to reduce energy consumption. The aim is to develop smart cities which can be able to integrate sustainable energy and transport solutions with information and communication technologies and, above all, urban areas where the quality of life can be improved through cooperative efforts.

Several solutions can be adopted such as:

- Deploying electric and hybrid vehicles and buses in place of conventional fuel-powered ones, along with associated charging stations and management technologies;
- Retrofitting buildings and improving lighting and equipment to achieve energy savings;
- Installing domestic and district-wide heating systems that use renewable sources integrated with smart energy monitoring and control technologies.

- Developing communication technologies and platforms to manage city infrastructure and traffic.

4. DEMO Committee's Entrance Statement

La Commissione DEMO aveva competenza e mandato di individuare e proporre alcune riforme che avrebbero permesso alle istituzioni europee di avere una maggiore copertura democratica ed indirizzarsi in modo più efficace e diretto ai bisogni dei cittadini UE. Questi Entrance Statement riflettono le soluzioni individuate da ciascun gruppo parlamentare alla questione proposta.

4.1 EPP's Entrance Statement

There is a group of scholars (among them M. Jolly, S. Hix, C. Lord., C.Q. Castro, and etc) who claim that EU runs a deficit of democracy. In other words, the EU institutions lack legitimacy. The argument is based on the geographical and cultural distance between ordinary people in the streets and the EU institutions. Indeed, today Brussels is not only a name of a Belgian province, it is an embodiment of European policymakers – unreachable and unattainable elites.

The European Union is the world's most successful experiment in regional integration. Those nearby want to join, those further away want to imitate but it is still an experiment; and as well as successes there are failures that should be corrected.

Some might claim that in such a huge and heterogeneous sphere as the European Union, the problem of deficit of democracy is unavoidable, and that representative democracy with active involvement of citizenry is rather a distinguishing feature of small states not supranational organisations stretching over the continent. There is an element of truth in these statements. The EU is indeed challenged bicultural, geopolitical, economic, social and other differences between the member states. However, we sincerely believe that we could improve the situation by introducing a number of initiatives.

The Single European Act of 1986, the Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, and Lisbon Treaties have made a great step towards forming the democratic shape of the EU by extending powers and functions of the European Parliament – the only directly elected body of the EU. The

Treaty of Lisbon, in particular, was a big step towards democratisation of the functioning of the Union. It has reinforced the stance of national parliaments on the supranational level. And what is more, the last treaty provided EU citizens with an opportunity to affect the EU policies directly by means of the European Citizens' Initiative tool. However, the latter change requires a sober glance.

Recent studies published at the Economist (2016) show that since the 1970s European states have been increasingly reliant on referenda. Direct participation of citizens in political discussions is an indispensable element of a modern democracy. Indeed, it seems that referenda provide citizens with a greater leverage over political decisions. However, this method of political discussion has a number of drawbacks that turn it into quite a controversial instrument. The Swiss referendum of 2014, which imposed barriers on immigration and thus undermined accords of the Schengen agreement, is a prime example of how outcomes of plebiscites could contradict the opinion of majority (Castro, C. Q 2014). Despite their being an efficient instrument to mobilise citizenry for active participation in political life of a country, there is much skepticism about referenda as a truly democratic political tool.

There is a gap between EU policymakers and ordinary people on the street. In order to bridge this gap we need an initiative that would motivate both sides of the breach to step forward. Institutional changes alone could bring to mid-term and short-term outcomes. Hence, alone they would not manage to solve the problem. In order to reconnect EU citizens with its institutions and, at the same time, develop and promulgate the European ideas, values and identity more efficiently, a more complicated set of measures must be initiated. A set of measures that will stimulate both sides of the breach.

Therefore, first of all, the European People's Party proposes to support development of civic society organisations that operate on a transnational basis. These organisations are full of young and ambitious activists who are carefully following politics and policies of the EU. It is hard to underestimate the input they could make into the future of the Union. And what is more, they are an important chain connecting ordinary citizens with policymakers. In other words, those civic organisations can be considered as a bridge over the chasm dividing people and the EU institutions. We have to promote and strengthen them.

Secondly, it is important to think progressively. Committed to this attitude, we would like to suggest that more attention be paid to the information platforms that have gained strong impetus on people's everyday life. In the era of new technologies, they turned into a platform

for discussion and exchange of information. There is no doubt that most international civic organisations in the EU are actively exploiting social networks in order to enhance their reach. Promotion and development of them will also lead to an increased accountability of EU policymakers to citizens of the Union.

Thirdly, we propose that the European Commission, as the main initiator of the legislative process in the EU cooperates with civic platforms on a formal basis. To be more specific, we propose that each year the Commissioners shall consider a fixed amount of proposals from civic organisations and forward the most adequate of them to the European Parliament as a legislative initiative. This will allow the Union to be more efficient in addressing European citizens' concerns. Moreover, if people see that their voice could have an impact on the decisions of EU policymakers, it will create a strong impetus for them to actively participate in shaping EU policies.

Last but not least, a national parliamentary forum should be established. Rather than duplicate the legislative work of the European parliament, it should ask questions about, and write reports on, aspects of EU and eurozone governance that involve unanimous decision-making. The forum could monitor the European Council and challenge decisions on foreign and defence policy, or policing and counter-terrorism.

To sum up, in the list of commitments of the European People's Party it is clearly stated: 'It is our task to adapt the European Union to the realities and needs of the 21st century by setting the right priorities and by bringing the European Union closer to the citizens.' We sincerely believe that the upper mentioned suggestions will make a great contribution to realisation of the given goal.

4.2 S&D's Entrance Statement

This document aims to define the position of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in regard to the issue of democratisation of the European Union. We, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, consider that the democratisation of the European Union is based on the two pivotal elements: institutional and social. These key factors exist in the functional interdependence and, thus, should be addressed simultaneously as a part of the democratisation debate in the EU.

It is important to stress that the European Union has made a significant progress in both areas, as the political integration between the member states has advanced. In particular, we have

jointly cooperated to enhance the media freedom and diversity by fighting the right-wing governments who try to limit it; we committed ourselves to defending all other fundamental human rights to provide our citizens with unconstrained ability to exercise their political will; and we took a strong position for the transparency of the EU – both in all negotiations and in access to information .

We consider that the EU institutions should continue building a more democratic intercourse with the European citizens. This may be obtained by constructing stronger partnerships with national governments, parliaments, and civil society. Most importantly, institutions should be capable of engaging citizens and be responsive to their needs. The Subsidiarity Control Mechanism and the European Citizens' Initiative introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 are the most pertinent examples of such steps. First, the Subsidiarity Control Mechanism ensured the dialogue between the domestic parliaments and the European Union institutions. Under the principle of subsidiarity, it provided an additional guarantee for the constant checks and verifications of the EU actions and their justification on the regional, national levels. Second, the European Citizens' Initiative provided individuals with the opportunity to exercise the direct democratic practices within the EU legislation. Thus, thirty six projects have already been initiated by the EU citizens, out of which ten received the required amount of signatories. Undoubtedly, these elements of the European Union's modus operandi reveal certain elements of democratisation on both institutional and social level.

However, the EU institutional operation has still proved to be structurally limited in particular areas. Thus, the mentioned Subsidiarity Control Mechanism cannot be regarded as fully efficient yet. The very definition of subsidiarity principle is too broad to ensure a coherent and transparent cooperation between the domestic parliaments and the European Commission. Subsequently, it may not only raise a number of legal questions, but also provide a space for manipulations – the practice which should be restrained in this area of cooperation. Moreover, the European Citizens' Initiative tool has proved to be more of a symbolic character so far. Despite the fact that ten initiatives brought up by the EU citizens received the required amount of signatories, none of them was sufficiently considered by the European Commission and, thus, none has directly influenced the law-making process in the EU.

Apart from this, our apprehension is even greater in regard to the social sector. Lack of political engagement suggests that Europeans have not formed a sufficient understanding of the European Union's institutions yet. Moreover, they do not perceive the mechanisms utilised by these institutions as projecting the needs of the society. In the light of the present

challenges on the international arena, our concern resides in the acknowledgement that these shortcomings may potentially grow into a real crisis of Europeanisation. The right-wing national parties are strengthening their positions all over the Europe, while the populist and extremist groups are taking advantage of the present instability and offer false immediate solutions through the anti-European rhetoric. Our task is to prevent such ideas from spreading and ensure citizen's understanding that only through cooperation and joint action can the EU member states overcome the current crises.

Therefore, we emphasise that the two following issues should be brought up within the EU democratisation debate: 1) lack of transparency and coherence of the EU institutions and 2) lack of responsive society. The solutions to these issues should not only combat the outlined problems but also enhance the reciprocity between the institutional and social areas of the EU. First, a number of procedural and legal reforms should be proposed to strengthen the role of national parliaments. They may include

- creating more specific working definition of subsidiarity, which would minimise the potential loopholes
- enhancing more active and efficient interparliamentary cooperation
- making structure of the 'yellow' and 'orange cards' practice more transparent.

Second, we believe that social policies still carry the paramount importance for enhancing democratisation in the European Union. In particular, we would like to concentrate on the policies which will foster the citizen's political engagement as well as form a sufficient civil society. We believe that the change in the people's perception of the European identity will trigger the institutional change in the EU. Therefore, the formation of the conscious European citizens' generation should be our primary goal. From this perspective, we propose that the solutions to the issue of the EU democratisation should be organised within the following action areas:

- Presenting universal changes into the educational systems of the member states. In particular, introducing subjects about the EU history, values, and institutions into the school programs
- Financing tours for students from all around the EU to Brussels with the purpose of educating them about the EU parliament and the mechanisms it utilises. Encouraging students' understanding of their rights and freedoms in the European Union and the way they can exercise and protect these rights under the EU law
- Promoting traineeships quotas for the European students and young specialists in the

We the Young People of Europe

EU institutions

- Proposing to hold summits on major issues within the EU borders and abroad to promote unity and cooperation not only between the EU member states but also those countries which are embraced by the EU Neighbourhood policy. Making emphasis on the identity-building element of such a practice
- Using modern technology and the Internet to foster youth's interest and activity in the field of the EU functioning

We, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, consider that the EU citizens should be fully aware of their rights and freedoms, and, thus, know how to exercise them under the EU law. The democratisation of the EU is not possible without solid and determined civil society, for these are people – demos – who should construct the democratic order and ensure the proper functioning of the EU institutions on the lowest level. We believe that with the strong European identity and society, the European Union will achieve even greater success in the future!

4.3 ECR's Entrance Statement

To begin, we would like to make clear in this response our view that the EU is a highly undemocratic institution. Structurally, as a 'Supranational Union of States', the EU it seems cannot plausibly be democratic (at least in the traditional sense of the word). As the German Constitutional Court argued for instance, there is a 'structural democratic deficit' in the construction of the EU, as that the principles of equality of state and equality of citizens cannot be reconciled in a Staatenverbund (Supranational Union). Similarly, a 2014 report by the British Electoral Reform Society wrote that 'This unique institutional structure makes it difficult to apply the usual democratic standards without significant changes of emphasis. The EU is a political regime that is, in one sense at least, entirely made up of minorities'. This response will now demonstrate key areas in which this democratic deficit manifests itself most plainly in the EU, before suggesting some areas for reform.

Areas in which the democratic deficit is most clear and pronounced:

- Sharing sovereignty. Being a member state in the EU means that many decisions affecting your nation are no longer made by your government. Now, whilst many of the decisions which the EU makes are on matters that the average European citizen simply doesn't care about (e.g consumer contracts, fisheries policy etc), the fact remains that the EU does decide

on crucial matters which affect all of us, without any viable, direct means for most European citizens to have a say. We find that the EU has failed to efficiently address key issues in the manner which Europeans would like such as in Immigration, Terrorism and Unemployment policies. Furthermore, it has visibly forced austerity measures on member states, causing unemployment and inflation rates in countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal to skyrocket (Of note is that austerity is a political choice, not a necessity). Such detrimental decisions have led to staunch criticism from both scholars and politicians. For instance, the former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis has written a very compelling book called 'And the Weak Suffer. What they Must?' – In which he criticises the EU's short-sighted austerity measures and rising authoritarianism in the Troika + how these factors stonewalled his efforts to resolve the Greek economic crisis. When were there national referenda on this expansion of EU power? The traditional right to determine a state's budget, which is one of the most essential rights of any democratically elected parliament, has disappeared in Europe.

- Unelected Leaders. Some may have seen the footage of Nigel Farage MEP standing up in the EU parliament upon the announcement of the new presidency of 'Herman van Rompuy', and asking 'Who are you? I've never heard of you – nobody in Europe has ever heard of you...who elected you?'. He rightfully pointed out that one of the most powerful men in the free world was unelected by those he claims to represent! And yet, the EU actually regularly appoints highly controversial figures into positions of power without consulting the European people. Sergei Stanischev, the former Prime Minister of Bulgaria who presided over one of the most corrupt regimes in the EU's history, was made the head of an umbrella party uniting social democratic parties from across the continent. Why? Because the European Commission is incapable of creating binding policy without the support of all EU member states, and must therefore frequently overlook the disgraced track records of the appointees who may be capable of promoting a policy consensus (over issues which the EU commission perceives to be important). Anyone must agree that we should have an element of control over who is elected to such supreme positions in the EU + what issues are debated.

- Lack of scope for change and EU forcing its 'status quo' on member states. It's a naïve view to imagine that any single state can reform the democratic deficit in the EU, primarily because every single

"Country" in the EU is a minority. A single state has a minimal chance of getting all of the 27 others to agree on its ideas for reform direction. (Incidentally, this is why the supranational state is so notoriously inefficient at tackling cross-border issues such as immigration, energy

policy and Russia quickly enough!). Furthermore, it has been shown that when the EU leadership wants to, it will push its policies through despite the objections of national states. The 2007 Lisbon Treaty is a prime example! The Irish were the only country that refused to cave in to political pressure from Brussels and insisted on holding a referendum (all 28 MS need to ratify to effect a new treaty into law). They held the referendum, the people of Ireland voted against the Lisbon Treaty. Then famously, President Barroso was recorded as saying ‘they’ve given the “wrong” answer’. Despicable. Then what happens? They exert even more pressure onto Ireland to have ANOTHER referendum only 9 months later, and the second time they voted yes. Astonishing. They should call EU referendums ‘neverendums’ because clearly they won’t stop until the country gives them the right answer.

- Such concerns over the democratic legitimacy of the EU and its leaders are particularly pertinent today, given that average voter turnout in EU elections across continent have been declining year on year without exception – to a low of 42.54% in 2014. Matej AuBeji (Director of the Law Institute in Ljubljana in Sweden) has cited this declining turnout as the social component of the democratic deficit.

Now in terms of what we believe could be done to resolve this situation and enhance EU democracy... We don’t mean to sound too pessimistic, however it seems that as mentioned, it is the very structure of the contemporary EU which renders it inherently undemocratic, and that reforms will therefore be both highly unlikely to occur in the first place and ineffective should they do so.

The structure of the body is so that the three main considerations of democracy, efficiency and transparency cannot be reconciled effectively. In terms of enhancing efficiency, the Lisbon treaty did set up a more comprehensible voting system on EU laws, facilitated the passing of legislation (by increasing the number of laws that are decided by majority vote and making it harder to form minority blocks), strengthened the EU’s international presence by creating a single European foreign minister and European diplomatic service. However, these reforms arguably came at the expense of democracy. Under the treaty, national governments would not be able to amend European legislation, nor would they gain powers to block it. This is despite the fact that the average European identifies much more with their national representatives than with their EU delegates. (Hence why so many rising stars in the EU parliament often turn their backs on EU politics in favour of national opinion tides).

Similarly, it appears that we cannot effectively reform any one of these three criteria (democracy, efficiency, transparency) in order to achieve more democracy in the EU without

also simultaneously addressing the others. For example, if we introduced more transparency to the EU, then its efficiency in negotiating deals and agreements with external nations would be severely undermined. Much of the effectiveness of the EU relies on its lack of transparency; because if all legislative proposals coming from the EU bureaucracy were played out in domestic politics, it is clear that there would be delays and much less would be achieved.

It therefore seems clear that the EU, as a structure of a 'supranational union of sovereign states', is inherently undemocratic. Its powers have grown exponentially and silently, from being an economic trade agreement to an arrogant supranational body which dictates over national sovereignty, without reference to popular mandates in any European countries. National sovereignty cannot be shared in this way and the system remain democratic.

If there were possible steps towards achieving more democracy in the EU, they would need to address the three main criteria simultaneously. However some ideas we have are to introduce European referenda for all citizens to input on the major decisions (immigration, terrorism, unemployment policies) that we have noted. A further idea aimed at reducing the influence of unelected senior EU figures over legislation is to grant more powers to MEPs over this legislation, or to introduce democratic, free and fair elections for ALL senior figures within the EU. Nigel Farage's statement question to Herman van Rompuy 'Who are you?!' raised a serious issue with the current system of electing our leaders.

- They are all equally important. Simultaneously enhancing democracy, transparency and efficiency will require a holistic vision, rather than focusing on any one single area to reform. Electing our leaders and holding actual direct democracy referenda on key policy areas are obvious steps towards our goals.

- The democratic deficit in the EU is so large as we have pointed out, and so impossible to reform without further sacrificing efficiency and transparency, that we fear no reforms will be enough to address it and we should instead revert the EU back to what it was meant to originally be: a purely economic trade agreement between countries. At this stage it was a force for good, and also helped to keep multinational corporations from exerting undue influence.

4.4 ALDE's Entrance Statement

(1) Which is the opinion your Parliamentary Group has on the reforms needed to allow the EU institutions to be more democratic and better address the needs of European citizens?

The common challenges facing the EU require common solutions. But decisions should not be taken over the heads of a population unable to influence them. Liberals' basic belief is that EU policies should be passed and subject to controls by the elected members of the European Parliaments. Both the EU Parliament and the national Parliaments should enter into a division of responsibilities where the EU Parliament will primarily hold the Commission on a short leash and be colegislator, while the main task of the national Parliaments is to keep a close check on their national governments when they make decisions in Brussels. The EU Parliaments and the national Parliaments are thus each other's close cooperation partners and should therefore be provided with better opportunities for cooperation and exchange of information.

(2) Within this topic, which is the most urgent issue you think is needed to be discussed?

The political systems must deliver far more concrete solutions to the problems facing the population and the challenges facing the EU.

The main route to a strengthening of the anchoring of the people in the EU is, therefore, to ensure a better, more effective EU which is able to deliver the right solutions. Female quotas, school fruit plan, and a ban on the sale of loose snuff are all examples of EU policies which don't really have any European added value. These breaches of the EU's principle of subsidiarity only serve to irritate and distract attention from the main priority of the EU – getting Europe through the crisis. The EU's principle of subsidiarity must be strengthened with an annual subsidiarity check so that the European Parliament and its Ministers can make an annual evaluation to ensure that the Commissions coming programme is, as a whole, in line with the subsidiarity principle. Today, the subsidiarity check does not work as a real judicial brake as cases are evaluated individually and not from an overall political prioritisation of where the EU should put in the most effort. To strengthen the work concerning the subsidiarity principle a "Subsidiarity Commissioner" who can enter into close dialogue with, not least, national parliaments, should be appointed. Today the Commission provides only abrupt replies in answer to questions concerning proposed legislation which may go against the subsidiarity principle. A Subsidiarity Commissioner should also have translateral responsibilities to ensure that new EU legislation is in line with the subsidiarity principle.

Effective administration, improved money management and uniform regulations Confidence in the EU is weakened when stories appear stating that there is frequently poor control over the EU's money and administration. The same is true when companies experience that

competitors in a neighbouring country have an unfair competitive advantage through not observing EU regulations. ALDE will work towards modernising the Commission and ensuring improved efficiency in its administration. The European Parliament must commit the new Commission to carrying out a thorough reform of its administration. Clear goals and specific demands for European added value must permeate the work of the Commission, not least in the EU's many funds, where projects only see the light of day because they can receive financial support and not because they solve a specific problem. No legislation may be proposed unless the Commission has carried out a systematic competitiveness check.

ALDE'S SOLUTIONS The new Commission must be more strategic in relating to the fact that the EU is losing popular support when companies and citizens feel that some countries cheat and thereby do not act on a level playing field. ALDE will work towards the setting up of a new claims court for private companies and ensuring that a failure to observe regulations governing agricultural policies is given a more significant status.

(3) Which solution you propose and which kind of Proposal the Parliament should adopt on this issue?

The common challenges facing the EU require common solutions. But decisions should not be taken over the heads of a population unable to influence them. ALDE's basic belief is that EU policies should be passed and subject to controls by the elected members of the European Parliaments. Both the EU Parliament and the national Parliaments should enter into a division of responsibilities where the EU Parliament will primarily hold the Commission on a short leash and be colegislator, while the main task of the national Parliaments is to keep a close check on their national governments when they make decisions in Brussels. The EU Parliaments and the national Parliaments are thus each other's close cooperation partners and should therefore be provided with better opportunities for cooperation and exchange of information. ALDE's rule of thumb is that increased competencies awarded to the Commission must go hand in hand with an increased strengthening of the European Parliament's control options. In the case of the setting up of a banking union and a general strengthening of the EU's economic cooperation, ALDE will work for the right of the European Parliament to oversee the Commission and the joint banking supervision. Unlike Denmark, far from all national parliaments check on their national governments when their ministers legislate in Brussels. For ALDE, it is crucial that all national Parliaments are systematically included when the Commission and a Government discuss how a country should observe the more stringent regulations dealing with economic cooperation. The

European term (the first 6 months of each year) should therefore be matched with a national term (6 months each year) so that the economic policies are anchored in the national Parliaments. The national parliaments should jointly have the same opportunity to challenge the Commission to publish proposed legislation as the case for the European Parliament.

This suggestion should be included in the annual subsidiarity check. The European Parliament has its natural home in Brussels and the moves to Strasbourg are an enormous waste of resources. ALDE will continue to put pressure on heads of states and governments to secure one single home for the European Parliament.

The last decades have been the "treaties' decades" the EU has either just concluded a treaty or is working on a new one. ALDE is always willing to look at the shared toolbox which is the basis of the EU treaties, especially against the background of the financial crisis. But, basically, ALDE believes that it is not a lack of implements in the treaties which are blocking the way for the "Europe of Solutions" but more a lack of political will. ALDE therefore sees its main task as securing a Europe achieving success in global influence and not long, drawn out discussions about the EU treaty base.

4.5 GUE/NGL's Entrance Statement

(1) Which is the opinion your Parliamentary Group has on the reforms needed to allow the EU institutions to be more democratic and better address the needs of European citizens?

The federal state, as explained in Hamilton's *The Federalist*, extends the orbit of democratic government in a Union of States, through the creation of a federal government. The confusion stems from the fact that the European Union is an institution that includes federal agencies, such as the European Parliament, the Court of Justice, the European Commission, the Central Bank, and intergovernmental bodies such as the Council of Ministers and the Council European. When decisions on policies are taken unanimously in the Council, as often happens, the European Parliament and the Commission are in fact excluded from the decision-making process. This is the institutional node that generates an image of a little transparent European governance, undemocratic and even hegemonic, such as when a State becomes the decision-maker of last resort, as Germany did during the crisis

(2) Within this topic, which is the most urgent issue you think is needed to be discussed?

Europe must not only tackle the problem of the European federal government, but also that of the various local governments who demand greater fiscal autonomy (such as Catalonia,

Scotland, Flanders, etc.). What government - regional, national, European - should decide the common monetary policy? In some phases of the economic cycle the government may want a more accommodative policy, in other phases a more restrictive policy. The ECB has to follow its own monetary policy that takes into account not only the domestic needs but also the international framework. You can not expect monetary policy that is not its competence: as already mentioned, is not optimal monetary area without a fiscal union. Second, the fiscal policy of each Union government must be independent (and not adversely affect) than other governments. In a federation we have to introduce rules of hard budget constraints. This means that every government must be accountable to their constituents regarding both the tax revenue and the outputs. It is unacceptable that a local government to create unsustainable budget deficits and then invoke the manna of the National or the European government. In the market the poorly managed fail. Similarly, the failure (or a severe punishment) must be provided for political inept or irresponsible. Europe has approved the so-called fiscal compact, much criticised, but already improved by the European Parliament with the Six Pack and Pack Two. In the new legislature could perhaps do more. The third characteristic concerns the creation of a limited union of transfers, the so-called bottom-saving states (ESM). This fund has required a considerable financial effort on the part of all euro area countries and is managed with the intergovernmental method. It offers conditional aid to financially distressed governments. The fund, which lends at interest rates lower than they would face the country at risk in the financial market, so far has not suffered losses, but may suffer in the event of serious default. In addition, its size is not sufficient to deal with important cases of bailout as could happen for countries like Italy. This is also a case of asymmetry of European federal system.

(3) Which solution you propose and which kind of Proposal the Parliament should adopt on this issue?

- In this gray landscape has made light an important initiative: the "Spinelli Group", made up of about 200 members of the major pro-European parties, has promoted a draft Fundamental Law, which is being submitted to the electoral debate so that the MEPs of the next term be able to complete their work on the basis of indications from citizens and public opinion. The Fundamental Law provides for the transformation of the Commission into a European government, accountable to Parliament and to the Council. The President of the Commission may appoint its commissioners (Ministers) and between them a Treasury minister, in charge of finance and economy. The European Parliament may vote no

confidence to the European government, and if there is no majority Alternatively, Parliament is dissolved. It introduces a single European college, to stimulate debate on the electoral candidates and European projects. It will radically reform the financial system, to allow the creation of a fiscal union and the issue of European public loans. It creates a new category of associate countries (Britain might choose this solution). Finally, the ratification of the Fundamental Law can happen in most states or European referendum. It is useless to enter here into the details of this project. It should be only noted that there is a real opportunity to transform the next European election in the initial phase of a constituent process that could lead in the coming years to the creation of the European Federation. However, this will only happen if the candidates to the European Parliament will fight to support the establishment of a federal government. These candidates must be able to explain to the citizens that the national political renewal is impossible without a federal Europe. It is true that there is a democratic deficit in Europe. But even more serious is the national democratic deficit, where governments are besieged by debts, minorities populist, neo-nationalist and secessionist. The fate of democracy in Europe now depends heavily on the political future of the union.