

## A Vibrant Europe for People – Topics for Discussion

The following are a number of lines that have been discussed during the Vibrant Europe Forum's meeting in Vaeshartelt (Maastricht) on March 23/24, 2012 as a potential platform to open up a broad discussion how to achieve the objectives of the declaration "A Vibrant Europe for People":

1. Higher sustainable economic growth:
  - a. Higher levels of innovation through strengthening public research, entrepreneurship, and improvement of the quality of the hands and minds. A European space for public research with competition based on an independent assessment of excellence. A European space for higher education which promotes both competition between institutions but also at the same time convergence between the richer and poorer member states. In innovation and education joint learning from the wealth of experiences in the different member states is essential to enable millions better to realize their unfulfilled talents, as a vital mainspring of inspiration and creativity, in European societies. As for entrepreneurship, the pervasive bureaucratic impediments so well documented in the annual World Bank document: "Doing Business" must simply and quickly be swept away.
  - b. Greening the economy in a competitive way with other parts of the world. An example is a CO2 tax on all products, imported or locally produced, building on the present emission trading scheme as the domestic European instrument.
  - c. The necessary internal coherence of macro economic policy, especially but not exclusively within the Euro area, can only be brought about through greater EU oversight of budget deficits. This revised fiscal compact must allow for a balanced framework, which permits the operation of automatic stabilizers. The whole system of macro governance needs to come under much clearer democratic control at European level.
  - d. A EU wide financial framework. Systemically important, high risk, pan-European banks should be better capitalized and less complex in their structures and opaque in their operations.. They must be supervised by a more vigilant regulation at EU level with the legal power and financial means to restructure failing banks. Long term shareholding should be rewarded with extra votes or dividend: making available better non-financial data should encourage a long termist outlook on the part of investors. Publicly listed banks, that meet clearly defined public purposes, deserve protection from unfriendly takeovers.
  - e. European wide infrastructure policies in public transport, energy transport, and ICT.
2. Full employment and increased social mobility:
  - a. A country specific minimum net wage level, to be achieved through a negative income tax, with a community implementation based on the local social contract.
  - b. Social partners and Governments should strive to create a more balanced package of work conditions for those with life time contracts and those with more flexible or temporary contracts. Labour market policy has to recognise that

jobs defined as a certain set of skilled tasks are disappearing more rapidly as a result of technological and market change. The costs of a commitment to lifetime employment may simply be unworkable for some employers. The gross wage should take into account the risk of industrialization diminishing in Europe because of lower wage costs in emerging economies and whether jobs threatened in this way can be made sustainable in the longer term.

- c. The realities of technological and market change argue for increased flexibility due to the decrease in the half-life of products and services. The social and economic case for deregulating the wage component on the labour market, as well as lowering protections for those lucky enough to be "in", needs to be examined when these protections are to the detriment of those who are unemployed or self employed.
- d. Setting country specific maximum (net) wages in agreement with the national Governments, institutional investors and with social partners as a means of contributing to social cohesion and to stop the run-away rewards for the rich, which are based on an upward spiral of comparisons within a magic circle of decision makers rather than any objective measurement of an individual's marginal productivity.
- e. Increased social mobility through access to quality basic education.
- f. Increasing labour mobility by breaking down the barriers between countries in pension regulations and other social security arrangements.
- g. Re-envisaging, but at the same time re-enforcing the role of the trade unions in line with needs of full employment, intergenerational equity, and the modern social contract.

### 3. External relations

- a. For immigration, a regulated admission of non-Europeans who want to contribute to European society, based on trust and social cohesion. The admission process would be a European competence with decentralized implementation.
- b. A vigorous European cooperation policy with the neighbouring countries, in the East, including Russia, in the South East with Turkey, and in the South with North Africa, including trade agreements and political cooperation abroad.

### 4. The Parliament

- a. The Parliament must decide on a European Program for implementation by the EU institutions after the elections of 2014, which can secure the backing of a majority. This program is decisive for the actions of the Commission. The Commission President is chosen by the Parliament.
- b. Parliamentary elections for 2019 must be based on two votes for each citizen, one for a transnational candidate and one for a candidate of the country.
- c. A single seat for the parliament should be established.

### 5. The Efficiency of Europe:

- a. European responsibilities will increase, but without an increase in central civil service. Implementation tasks should be delegated to decentralized agencies and to the civil service of the member states, which could act for many tasks for Europe.
- b. Language is very much in the heart of the nation states. Yet language is also a divisive force in Europe. There needs to be rationalisation and economy in the implementation of the existing language regime. "Brussels" is in effect mono or bilingual. Translation services should be decentralized to the member states.