

Vibrant Europe Forum

Europe for People

VEF Press Release, Maastricht, April 10, 2012

European Society Leaders Call for a Vibrant Europe

Declaration Proposes Action Plan for Sustainable Growth, Full Employment and Social Mobility

Thirty high profile representatives call for action to turn an increasingly weary Europe into a 'vibrant' Europe by means of a declaration signed in Maastricht's Castle Vaeshartelt.

The commitment was unique in that key individuals from all walks of life, generations and countries far beyond the confines of Europe came together around their commitments to have European citizens' voices heard.

CEOs of multinationals, world leading academics, activists and politicians from various parties, including the Social Democrats, Greens, Liberals and Christian Democrats, agreed to pressure their constituencies on behalf of their societies and act as change agents with a view to make a lasting difference at the European elections of 2014.

'Europe needs to become more than the sum of its parts', was the common view, in a plea to bring the heydays of European integration of the early 1990s back to life. There could not be a more opportune time for such initiative as the Union is shaken and divided.

Jo Ritzen, former Dutch Minister and World Bank Vice-President, is the driving force behind the initiative. "This is a significant step for a European Union in which European citizens are better served in the safety of their community, in the nurturing of their talents and in the hope of betterment for themselves and their children", says Ritzen, who currently acts as a senior advisor to the German Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). He will be supported in this pursuit by former Dutch party leader Lousewies van der Laan, former Austrian Minister Rudolf Scholten, and IZA Director Klaus F. Zimmermann, who added that well informed labor market policies in Europe are badly needed to provide both more welfare as more income security to the people of Europe.

Further information on the Vibrant Europe Forum, its complete declaration and the topics of discussion of the experts are available on the initiative's webpages at <http://vef.merit.unu.edu>. The VEF declaration can also be found on the IZA home page at <http://www.iza.org>.

*Jo Ritzen
Vibrant Europe Forum
United Nations University-MERIT
Keizer Karelplein 19
6211 TC Maastricht
The Netherlands
T: +31 43 388 44 39
F: +31 43 388 44 99
vef@merit.unu.edu*