

Ulrike Guérot

REPUBLIC OF EUROPE? FROM THE UNION OF NATIONAL STATES TO A EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY



SCHUMAN - SEURA

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EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT
SUOMI FINLAND



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Foreword

Southwest Finland is a genuinely international, European region. Throughout history, we the people living in Southwest Finland have always been the most international and closest to Europe. Currently, we are also active in international organizations and open to new ideas and partnerships. We develop continuously our international accessibility through our cooperation networks. Our region is active especially in the Baltic Sea region. Besides this, we are aiming at bringing together actors around the Baltic Sea, as well as supporting and generating multilateral partnerships and multidimensional co-operation.

The Regional Council of Southwest Finland and the Europe Direct information office are dedicated to promote an active European debate on a daily basis. Accordingly, we want to support our regional actors and non-governmental organizations in a spirit of good partnership. Indeed, the Discussion Papers Series by Schuman Society is an excellent example how we can promote European debate at the local level.

In recent years, the debate on the future of Europe has intensified. This is more than welcome, not least due to Brexit. In Finland in general and in Southwest Finland in particular, the support for EU membership has traditionally been fairly strong compared to many other EU countries. However, it is always valuable to stop and contemplate about the challenges and the future of the EU. What do we want from the EU and what are we willing to do to make it work? Developing the EU is not only an obligation of the EU institutions. It is a common responsibility for all us Europeans. So that Europe would flourish and be successful in competing with other continents.

Since the 1950s building of the Single Market has been the backbone of the EU. This is still the case today and developing of the Single Market continues. The single currency, Euro, and the free movement are the key achievements of this project. However, one of the most important values of the EU is democracy. Member states are committed to democracy and the EU has also developed European democracy. The best example of this is the European Parliament with elections to be held one year from now in May 2019.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law are the key values of the EU. They form the foundation of our common Europe. For these values, we should actively work together with other Europeans. Currently, the domestic situation in some EU countries is quite challenging. Common European values are now being tested in many ways. Clearly, our respond is not to give up our values, but to develop the EU and our common Europe forward. What is need is discussion, interaction and a clear vision of also tomorrow's Europe.

Ilkka Kanerva

Member of Parliament, Honorary Minister

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Esipuhe

Varsinais-Suomi on aidosti kansainvälinen, eurooppalainen maakunta. Läpi historian olemme tässä osassa maata olleet aina kansainvälisimpiä ja lähimpänä Eurooppaa. Toimimme nytkin aktiivisesti kansainvälisissä järjestöissä ja olemme avoimia uusille ideoille ja kumppanuuksille. Kehitämme jatkuvasti omaa kansainvälistä saavutettavuuttamme yhteistyöverkostojen välityksellä. Alueemme toimii aktiivisesti erityisesti Itämeren piirissä, ja tavoitteenamme onkin tuoda yhteen itämerellisiä toimijoita sekä tukea kumppanuuksien ja yhteistyön syntymistä eri suuntiin.

Varsinais-Suomen liitto ja sen yhteydessä toimiva Europe Direct -tiedotuspiste ovat joka päivä mukana edistämässä aktiivista Eurooppakeskustelua. Haluamme myös tukea maakuntamme toimijoita ja kansalaisjärjestöjä tässä työssä hyvässä kumppanuushengessä. Schuman-seura ry:n keskustelupapereiden sarja onkin erittäin hyvä avaus paikallisen Eurooppa-keskustelun edistämiseksi.

Viime vuosina entisestään voimistunut keskustelu EU:n tulevaisuudesta on enemmän kuin tervetullutta. Ei vähiten mm. brexitin myötä. Meillä Suomessa ja Varsinais-Suomessa tuki EU-jäsenyydelle on moniin muihin EU-maihin verrattuna perinteisesti varsin vahva. Silti on hyvä yhdessä pysähtyä pohtimaan EU:n haasteita ja suuntaa. Mitä me EU:lta haluamme ja mitä olemme valmiita tekemään sen toimivuuden hyväksi? EU:n kehittäminen ei ole vain EU:n toimielinten asia. Se on meidän kaikkien eurooppalaisten yhteinen vastuu. Siksi että Eurooppa voisi hyvin ja siksi, että Eurooppa pärjäisi kilpailussa muiden mannerten kanssa.

EU:n kantava hanke on ollut 1950-luvulta alkaen, ja on edelleenkin, sisämarkkinoiden rakentaminen. Tämä työ jatkuu edelleen. Mm. yhteinen valuutta ja vapaa liikkuvuus ovat sisämarkkinahankkeen keskeisiä saavutuksia. Yksi keskeisimmistä EU:n arvoista on kuitenkin demokratia. Jäsenvaltiot ovat sitoutuneet siihen ja EU:ssa on myös kehitetty eurooppalaista demokratiaa. Tästä hyvänä esimerkkinä on mm. Euroopan parlamentti, jonka vaaleihin käymme jälleen vuoden kuluttua toukokuussa 2019.

Demokratia, ihmisoikeudet ja oikeusvaltioperiaate ovat EU:n keskeisiä arvoja, yhteisen Euroopan kivijalka. Niiden puolesta meidän kannattaa tehdä työtä yhdessä muiden eurooppalaisten kanssa ja olla siinä työssä aktiivisia. Tilanne joissakin EU-maissa on tällä hetkellä toki haastava. Yhteisiä eurooppalaisia arvoja koetellaan nyt monin tavoin. Me emme tietenkään niistä luovu, vaan kehitämme EU:ta ja yhteistä Eurooppaamme. Siihen tarvitaan keskustelua, vuorovaikutusta ja selkeää visiota myös huomisen Euroopasta.

Ilkka Kanerva

Kansanedustaja, ministeri

Maakuntahallituksen puheenjohtaja, Varsinais-Suomen liitto

Summary

Europe needs a new narrative, a new faith - a utopia. The European Union can no longer be maintained in its present state. The people of Europe know that. Half of the citizens want to return to nationalism the other half want more Europe, a different Europe. Increasing populism, however, has reasons to be found in the structures and not among the citizens. In her article, political scientist Dr. Ulrike Guérot, outlines how the problem of the European Union can be solved with a utopia - the creation of the European Republic. The cornerstone of this utopia is the principle of general political equality. Its application would lead to equality of market participants in the European internal market and would summarise the equality of European citizens. This makes it possible to move from an internal market project to a political community committed to the public welfare of European citizens. In this utopia, the concept of sovereignty, which is leased from the states, is deconstructed and rediscovered as a concept that can be individualized - here one is a Union citizen and a citizen in one - and therefore a bearer of sovereignty. In this sense, the utopia should lead to a new European democracy.

Yhteenveto

Eurooppa tarvitsee uuden kertomuksen, uutta uskoa – utopian. Ei riitä, että jatkossa vain tyydymme ylläpitämään Euroopan unionin nykytilaa. Myös ihmiset ymmärtävät tämän. Puolet kansalaisista haluaa palata vahvempaa nationalismia, toisen puolen halutessa enemmän, mutta toisenlaista Eurooppaa. Populismien kasvun syytä pitää kuitenkin hakea rakenteista, ei kansalaisten keskuudesta. Nyt käsillä olevassa analyysissä politiikantutkija, professori Ulrike Guérot hahmottelee, millä tavoin Euroopan unionin ongelmia voitaisiin ratkaista pyrkimällä kohti utopiaa, eurooppalaisen tasavallan luomista. Tämän utopian kivijalkana on yleisen poliittisen tasa-arvon periaate, jonka soveltaminen johtaisi markkinoiden tasa-arvoistumiseen Euroopan sisämarkkinoilla sekä tasa-arvoon Euroopan kansalaisten välillä. Tämän seurauksena olisi mahdollista edetä sisämarkkinavetoisesta integraatiosta kohti poliittista unionia, joka olisi sitoutunut Euroopan kansalaisten julkiseen hyvinvointiin. Tähän utopiaan, joka johtaisi uuteen eurooppalaiseen demokratiaan, kuuluu myös ajatus jäsenmailta lainatun suvereenisuuden käsitteen uudelleenmäärittämisestä käsitteenä, joka yhdistää paikallisen ja eurooppalaisen ja siten tekee kansalaisista suvereenisuuden kantajia.

Introduction: A sober look at Europe today

In his essay *After Europe* the political intellectual Ivan Krastev raises the question of whether we are experiencing a comparable “disintegration moment”, as was once the case with the multiethnic Habsburg empire or the Soviet Union. Referring to Josef Roth’s novel *Radetzky March*, he notes that when political and cultural artefacts disappear, they will do so abruptly. He aptly concludes : “The end ... is both inevitable and inadvertent.” The end is the natural outcome of structural deficiencies and an unintended consequence of a sleepwalking process, a special moment with its own dynamic (see Krastev, 2017). It is legitimate to ask if we are moving towards such an epoch of change and if - as Stefan Zweig once wrote - our contemporaries are not able to recognise the historical moment that they currently find themselves in.

The EU has, in fact, fallen to a deep depression. Last year it enjoyed the confidence of only around 47 per cent of all Europeans, even if the numbers rise slightly in the face of the Brexit debacle, which comes along like a grubby European *reality show*, and interestingly, also in countries such as Hungary. But for such a large political project, even for the reestablishment of Europe *à la Emmanuel Macron*, such low support from the public in many parts of the EU is clearly not enough. The great erosion of the European idea has clearly left deep marks on the Continent. The party systems in most EU Member States have collapsed, not least in the wake of the euro crisis; the European social democrats have disappeared; the European left is deeply divided in all EU Member States and the political vacuum is filled by nationalist parties that have come together in a kind of “identitary international”, from Geert Wilders to Marine Le Pen, the Polish Law and Justice (PiS) party to the Hungarian Fidesz party, the True Finns or the Austrian FPÖ. These parties are all well organised, have a large electorate behind them and clearly also enough financial sponsors. These national parties do not pursue a social policy everywhere but often, e.g. in Poland, and have therefore become a threat to left-wing parties in particular. Where the left was not able to hold its arguments about the social issue in the public arena, the arguments moved to the right.

On the one hand, the right-left polarisation has increased; on the other, there is a bourgeois middle that is resisting this push of nationalism and

populism. Behind Macron's successful election victory and his slogan "*Ni Droite, ni Gauche*" is the same structural crisis of political representation that made it difficult for Germany to form a sensible coalition at the turn of 2017/ 2018.

If the European idea is to be saved, clear and ambitious European goals must now be pursued that go far beyond the scenarios for the future of the EU, which the Commission presented to the public in March 2017. From the banking crisis to the euro crisis, from austerity to refugee policies, from the Catalan independence referendum to the next showdown of Brexit negotiations, the EU has not come out of crisis mode for years. The outcome of the elections in Italy in March 2018 represents a major challenge, not only for the country itself but also for Europe. In the Czech Republic a prime minister has been elected who has long written off the EU.

For a long time the word Weimarisation haunted Europe's gazettes, and a look at Poland or Hungary suffices to capture analogies of the political situation with the inter-war years. The participation of the FPÖ in the new Austrian government and, above all, its access to security-relevant ministries of the interior and defence also perplex international observers. The current incantation of civil society cannot belie the fact that a creeping militarisation of European societies has long been taking place. Everywhere, recruits are sought and defence budgets are increased. The surveillance state is also thriving on the breeding grounds of fear and security discourses. For nothing, the EU has spent so much money in recent years for "surveillance", anti-terror measures or even the European border-protection agency Frontex. To in favour of "more Frontex" today equals a European commitment. Subliminally, the narrative shifts from the EU as a peace union to a security union. Where other policies in the EU have long ceased to function or have never functioned, e.g. the refugee policy, the motive of security is still apt to create European unity or at least to credibly pretend.

Inappropriate comparisons: Europe between Weimarisation and post democracy

“Every epoch is immediate to God”, is what the famous German historian Leopold von Ranke said in a much-cited lecture from 25 September 1854 (see Ranke 1971, p. 60). In this respect, European history from 1914 until 1945 is not repeating itself. Nothing from that time can be seriously compared with today’s situation in the EU - neither the social nor the economic or political structure, nor the historical or global context. And yet there are parallels with the first half of the 20th century: a rapid technological acceleration (today we have the Internet and robots, at that time there were telegraph poles and aircraft) and a growing losers of modernisation (back then the mass of agricultural workers and artisans repressed by the industry, today the unqualified workers living in precarious conditions) and not least the “crisis of masculinity” - what at the time was the first disassembly of patriarchy by women’s suffrage is today the demand for 40 percent women on executive boards (see Blom, 2009). “Male” is now the second-most popular factor in attracting right-wing populist parties after “education” (see Foa & Mounk, 2017). In his book *Male Fantasies*, in the 1970s Klaus Theweleit already vividly described that nationalism, militarism and fascism were not least a reaction to the first women’s movement (see Theweleit, 1977). Even today young men are primarily concerned about security and a retreat to nationalism, coupled with the desire for strong leadership. So it is not surprising that in Europe, according to some studies, the number of those who are not convinced that democracy is the best form of government is on the rise.

The fact is that Europe is again undergoing a modernisation push similar to the one of around one hundred years ago, and the question is whether European societies will solve this one together - through a European social contract - or, once more, against each other. The path dependency of the EU produces systemically national solutions through the European Council. In this respect, it is crucial to break the power of the Council in the political system of the EU and, instead, to enhance the sovereignty of the citizens as the actual subject of policy-making in the EU. In other words, the European integration of states was yesterday; now it is about European democracy or a European union of the citizens, promised in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 but never honoured. And democracy

essentially means the parliamentarisation and separation of powers. The EU, in its current form, is a long way from both.

The cover picture chosen by the most well-known German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, for his latest book on Europe, *The Lure of Technocracy* (Habermas, 2013), has twelve stars attached to it like a marionette. The existing EU system is, then, the epitome of “post-democracy”, as Colin Crouch put it: “You can always vote but you have no choice” (Crouch, 2008). Above all, this is aimed at the technocratisation of politics, which shows itself to be particularly good at the European level. Also the non-word of the year 2010, “without an alternative”, which was used again and again by the German Chancellor especially in relation to the European sovereign debt crisis, points in the same direction. The term suggests that there are no alternatives in political decision-making processes from the outset and therefore no need for discussion and argumentation. Following this assumption, democratic decision-making processes, that is to say, the struggle for alternatives, would become obsolete. Even if the EU is not yet a technocracy in the purest sense, the path to a European democracy, in which there is a common vote, is still far off.

This becomes particularly clear in the EU’s inability to enforce the ECJ ruling on the refugee relocation crises vis-à-vis Hungary and Poland. But if the EU cannot enforce any law, is it still a legal community? As a result, more than ever before, in the EU today the central issue is who will decide? In other words: who is the sovereign? The EU does not know or cannot sanction its own ECJ judgments against its Member States. It does not have the legitimate authority in the spirit of Max Weber. That is the fundamental problem of today’s European Union. For this reason, it cannot, in fact, put a stop to the dismantling of democratisation of the national state, such as in Poland or Hungary.

Europe and its citizens

The European population knows this. One half of the citizens wants to go back to nationalism; the other half wants a *different* Europe. A part of the civil society, especially young people, is therefore, more and more passionate about renewing old structures.

This raises the question of what we are doing in this Hegelian moment, in which a system is exhausted but at the same time has no power to reform because it is in a populist state of shock. In the 1992 Maastricht Treaty the state and the market were, de facto, decoupled, placing the currency and economy and European tax and social policy in national hands: state, industry and democracy are, therefore, not a stable triangle at European level today but, rather, mutually exclusive. The European economy uses the single market and the common currency, without worrying about redistribution of democracy. In short: European democracy has no economic driver.

The EU is caught up in the “unproductive contradiction” (Ménasse, 2014) that the political project Europe is in the hands of nation states, but these nation states cannot shape Europe; or, as the late Ulrich Beck put it: If we want to have a fiscal union, we have to accept the transfer of fiscal sovereignty from national governments to a European organization. How is this to be achieved? (Beck, 2013). More precisely: the central role of the European Council in the governance system of the EU is systemically opposed to a European solution (see Streeck, 2013; Offe, 2015; Brunkhorst, 2014), for European solutions do not work, because respective “national interests” are invoked and favoured.

Sovereignty, unity, democracy

Thus it was not integration but sovereignty, unity, democracy that were the key words used by Emmanuel Macron in both his Europe speeches in Athens and at the Sorbonne in September 2017. Already in 1964, Walter Hallstein, the first president of the European Commission, said in his famous speech in Rome: “[Europe’s goal] is and remains the overcoming of the nations and the organization of a post-national Europe” (Hallstein,

1964). Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, it is time to remember this. Europe's founding idea is also Europe's future! However, today, it is no longer about "more integration", as often as it is demanded, but rather about a decidedly different Europe. It is about shaping a European democracy beyond the national States, about embedding the euro in a transnational democracy.

Today Europe is almost completely embedded in the economic and monetary policy. The problem is that political and social integration have not kept pace and are asymmetrical to economic integration. But one market and one currency are the conditions for *one* European democracy. Functionally, democracy is ultimately institutionalised solidarity. In line with the French sociologist Marcel Mauss, a nation is ultimately nothing other than the "institutionalised solidarity" of a group of individuals who become aware of their economic and social independence, as he writes in *Die Nation oder der Sinn fürs Soziale* (Mauss, [1934] 2017, 32ff.). When it comes to Emmanuel Macron's proposals for a European finance minister or a euro budget, ultimately, Europe is today struggling with nothing more than its institutionalised solidarity, in other words, literally, its nation-building.

Europe and its socio-economic differences

The benefits are that the industrial outcome or the economic growth in Europe can hardly be reproduced within national borders. The real socio-economic imbalances in Europe are no longer between the nation states. Above all, there is a great imbalance between the centre and the periphery and a great imbalance between the urban and rural regions, and that is everywhere in the eurozone - also within Germany or France (see Ballas et al., 2014). Within the eurozone there are no more "national economies". A German car, for example, is not "German": it has leather seats from Italy, tyres from France or screws from Slovenia, but ends up in the German export statistics. Apart from that, economies such as Slovenia are largely dependent on the German automobile industry and are in this sense not an autonomous economy (see Pogátsa, 2009). Only, with institutionalised solidarity the intellectual leap into a common Europe has not yet been made.

What is measured on a national basis, which should no longer be measured on a national basis, is productivity, exports, etc. Basically, it is nonsense to measure the export statistics on a national level within *one* monetary area. Differences, for example, between Hessen and Brandenburg are also not measured. Equally nonsensical or pointless is the discussion about the necessary state insolvency law within the eurozone, i.e. the possibility for individual countries to leave the monetary union if they can no longer meet their debtor obligations. An example of this is the American financial constitution. Now it is true that in America individual federal states can go “broke”, such as New York in the 1970s. However, for the entire monetary area in the United States there are uniform government bonds under whose “umbrella” bankruptcy can be settled, precisely not using “market conditions”. Anyone who calls for insolvency law for states within the euro area but at the same time refuses to introduce eurobonds is, de facto, preparing to embark on the exit from the euro and ultimately leaves the insolvency issue to speculative developments. This discussion has recently become a hot topic again with the “position paper” of German coalition negotiations, but shimmering through the evasive formulations is that the political actors in Germany are now realising that, in addition to the above-mentioned “*fiscal backstop*”, there must be a “*monetary backstop*” within a monetary union in the long term. This has long been written about in specialist literature (see Collignon, 2017).

“Euroland” must therefore be understood, in short, as an aggregated economy with a national account, otherwise the euro states will be monetarily – and thus its citizens fiscally – in competition: operation within a currency area and a value-added chain with unequal taxes, wages and social rights. But that does not work within *one* political community. If Europe is to be rethought, if it is to become *one* democracy in the near future, then a price must be paid for it: the general political principal for all citizens of Europe! Civil (legal) equality is, according to Habermas, one of the central foundations for the stabilisation of a democracy. Along this principal, Europe would have to be rethought, or, in other words: legal equality *tops* nationality.

The previous national political approach of the EU or the eurozone is currently de facto perverting the protective function of the state it has for its citizens: the euro Member States are in a monetary (by bond-ranking and speculation on national debt) and fiscal *race-to-the-bottom* competition, which is held on the backs of the Europeans. But states

should actually guarantee equal rights for its citizens, for they are actually responsible for the people and not for the markets. In the euro system, on the other hand, this is exactly the opposite. The euro states are competing for their citizens to guarantee the best possible conditions for “national” industry. Within one and the same national state democracy that would not be possible: from Rügen to Munich in the Federal Republic, despite regional differences, in the end, everyone receives the same unemployment benefit, or Hartz IV. This is exactly the system-stabilising element à la Habermas, or, simply put, the price of democracy, even if the living conditions in Rügen and in Munich are *not* the same.

The general political principle of equality

Different civil and social rights in Europe, above all within the eurozone, are precisely the problem that is paving the way for a transnational European community. It is not about national competition, but in all European states it is about globalisation losers versus globalisation winners, which, however, are not adequately taken into account in the political processes of the European Union.

Thus the influx of populist currents is a predominantly rural phenomenon today - everywhere in Europe. So a rural, social crisis will turn into a European election crisis. Their results can be seen in almost every election in which the share of votes in populist parties in rural regions with high unemployment continually increase. The rural social crisis of today is the European crisis of tomorrow!

However, structural reforms - the EU's eternal *buzzword* - do not help, because where there is nothing, nothing can be reformed. Of the 6 billion euros earmarked to combat youth unemployment in 2013, only about 25 million were used because in the rural regions of southern Europe there is no infrastructure, no middle class, and thus also no dual education system for young people. The memory of the fact that economics is, in the first instance, culture and therefore something that has to do with history and geography, as Montesquieu already acknowledged in his book published in 1748, *The Spirit of the Laws*, is completely lacking in today's consideration of the crisis (see de Secondat, 1965). The consequences are inappropriate political decisions that cause disruption to EU rural life

instead of preserving decentralised environments where organic farming is possible.

Applying the general principal of equality for all Europeans – starting with the eurozone – the equality of the internal market participants would be added to the equality of European citizens. Precisely this would be the leap from a purely internal market project, which through European competition law and adjusted legislative acts has essentially developed integration dynamics of (see Grimm, 2014, 1046-1058), towards a political unity committed to a *Res Publica Europaea* – the public good of European citizens. For, until now, the same rights and regulations have only applied to market participants in the EU legal community – with consequences for oil cans to light bulbs. Yet, European citizens enjoy no legal equality.

Ius aequum however, that is, equitable law, is the foundation of every democracy. And those who embark on a political body based on equal rights establish a republic. If European citizens did this, they would found a European Republic. That would be a paradigm shift from the United States of Europe, based on the integration of nation states and their sovereignty, to a European Republic in which sovereignty rests with the citizens, and which would have to be represented as a central body of opinion and decision-making in a European parliament – and not in an opaque EU Council.

De facto, this was already promised in 1992 in the Maastricht Treaty; this “civic union” was, however, never politically implemented. In the EU, the citizen is not the sovereign of the political system and the European citizens are not equal before the law. To change this would be a radical beginning for Europe, which alone would point the way to a European democracy. In other words, this means: one euro and one IBAN number would, perspectively, have to be followed by one social insurance number for Europeans. Then, *ius aequum* in the sense of Cicero would be given, and, thus, the central foundation of a European Republic, of which Victor Hugo dreamt as early as 1872: “À coup sûr, cette chose immense, la République européenne, nous l'aurons.” Through the same legal basis for Europeans, European solidarity could also be institutionalised, making Europe a nation in the sense of Mauss.

How to get there? From normative equality and cultural diversity

First it should be noted that European citizens are not necessarily opposed to such a European democracy. According to some social science studies, there are, for instance, majorities for a European unemployment insurance scheme. So Europe does not arise through the common identity or the “European demos”, always said to be missing, but through common law. It is the convergence of law that gives rise to commonality; in this case from the right to vote, tax law and social rights of entitlement. The euro was, in reality, nothing other than a legally fixed key date regulation for monetary convergence. Legal convergence, however, is not centralisation, which is always assumed in a European unification process. In Germany, for instance, the benefits from unemployment insurance are the same for all citizens, although the federal republic is not a centralised state and the individual states are culturally very different.

A universal, equal and direct right to vote (“One person, one vote”) for the whole of Europe would thus be the next important step in establishing a political unity on our continent that ultimately legitimises the economic unity of the single market and the euro. Only then can the European Parliament become the initiator of a European democracy worthy of the name, and whose sovereigns are European citizens. In other words, we must legitimise the legacy of the French Revolution: i.e. from the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Italy or the Republic of Poland becomes a European Republic – by universal and equal elections based on the principle of the equality of all European citizens. The objection that such a move outweighs the big states, especially Germany, over the small ones like Luxemburg or Malta, is not justified, because *politics tops nation!* Do all Germans vote the same?

With this approach, Europe would finally have a parliament in which the political would be placed above the national. This is already what the European Parliament claims to be today. But it is neither the legislator of the EU, nor is it based on equal voting rights. It is, therefore, not the place of European democracy, precisely because it is not elected in a general and equal election and therefore does not represent the

sovereign of Europe, the European citizens, and, in addition, has no right of initiative. A new European movement would therefore have to aim for a full parliamentarisation of the European system - along the lines proposed by Emmanuel Macron in both his speeches, Athens from 7 September and Paris on 26 September 2017. In both speeches he significantly develops the notion of one European sovereignty, which is aimed at various European policy objectives, from security policy to a European prosecutor's office to a Eurozone with a fundamentally restructured legitimacy.

Utopia is what we make of it

For many, it is not possible today to imagine precisely this for the future Europe. Similarly, for the territories of the German Confederation around 1870 a unified German social insurance system was also unimaginable: “Never!” is what was called out back then. And then came Bismarck and it worked. No one can say what is conceivable and enforceable on a European level long term. On the contrary, the idea of common European unemployment insurance began a long time ago in Brussels (see Dullien, 2008).

The good news is that the majority of European citizens have long accepted the principle of political equality. According to a sociological study, this principle - also with regard to social benefits - has long been accepted by approximately two-thirds of European citizens (see Gerhards and Lengfels, 2013). The population seems to be further along than its political elites who are currently following populist pressure. Therefore, there is no need for discussion about a European identity that does not exist, but a new perspective. The European mantra of “unity in diversity” always means only normative unity in cultural diversity.

This would be achieved by a political system in Europe that complies with the principle of Montesquieu’s separation of powers: a Europe-wide legislature controls a European executive. A eurozone parliament elected according to the same voting rights would be given full legislative powers. This is democracy as we know it! The European Parliament should be able to bring in legislative initiatives, i.e. have full rights of initiative and thus also budget rights, and the so-called ordinary legislative procedure which requires the approval of both chambers, would have to be extended to all policy areas. European regions could establish a European Senate as a second chamber. The European President could be elected directly.

The European Republic would then be a kind of network of autonomous regions and cities over which a republican umbrella would be stretched, which guaranteed political equality for all citizens. The European regions and metropolises as constitutive bearers of a European Republic would be bound together by a transnational democracy, whose three main pillars would be, firstly, a pro-rata parliament, secondly, a congress with

two senators each per region/metropolis, and thirdly, the identity-forming direct election of a European president – as it is proposed today in numerous party programmes.

The charm would be that the simultaneously large and federally organised Euro states (i.e. above all Germany, but also Spain or Italy) would be deconstructed in their autochthonous regions, and thus, above all, Germany would no longer be able to assume a hegemonic position of power in the European *governance system*: 50 equally sized regions in Europe (see Menasse, 2004) represent a different “*level-playing field*” than the current 19 Euro or 28 (soon 27) EU states, in which the three (too) large EU Member States tend to dominate and block the smaller Member States. Europe would be what it always should have been: the overcoming of nation states. Savoy, Alemanien, Eupen-Malmedy, Bohemia, Alsace, Basque Country, Scotland, Tyrol or Bavaria, they would all have their cultural place in a European Republic. The Catalan question would also thus be solved *en passant*.

In this context, it should be noted in conclusion that the European federalists of the first hour, who in the midst of fascism in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s conceptionally anticipated a united Europe, had in mind the idea of a Europe, a Europe as a federation of roughly equal, regional units in which the big nation states do not dominate the smaller ones. The champion of European integration, the Swiss [Denis de Rougemont](#), and others, were convinced that the new Europe must be consistently post-national. The Austrian national economist Leopold Kohr already argued convincingly in 1972 that only anchoring Europe in the regional could be the solution, among other reasons, because this would best correspond with Montesquieu’s concept (and revived by Hannah Arendt) of a “Federation of small units” (see Kohr ([1972], 1995). Europe would win both ways: ability to act in the international arena externally; citizen proximity and regional identity internally.

Today’s European Union is not stable. Without a decisive step forward it will not be sustainable in its current form. Europe needs a clear goal, a clear direction and perspective, an emancipatory agenda, a concrete idea of itself. The one European market and the one European currency must be supplemented by a European democracy, because a currency is already a social contract, but democratic legitimacy is needed. This would be the decisive milestone in transforming the EU’s political system from a

“union of states”, which is essentially “governed” by an EU Council that is only indirectly legitimated via a real European democracy, in which ultimately only one thing can apply: the citizens are the sovereigns of the political system, they are all equal before the law, the parliament decides and there is a separation of powers. The general political principle of equality is the basis of every democracy. Its implementation into the political system of the EU would be the great reformation of Europe! In order to accomplish this radical new beginning of Europe we only have to remember the definition of nation which Theodor Schieder, a conservative historian, by the way, already stated in 1963: “A nation is a community of citizens, not primarily a linguistic or ethnic community”. We are - perhaps or hopefully - on the verge of the emergence of Europe in the sense of a European Republic!

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