



Europe in the World

Summary of Inaugural Meeting

Venice International University

7th March 2005

Session 1: What is Europe?

Participants were asked to consider what Europe is, and to provide a transport metaphor for its current situation. The three groups provided such diverse responses as Europe's values, role in the world, institutional set up, its current challenges, and the need to create a brain for Europe.

One core idea to emerge was that the project of European integration was a way to pacify a war-torn continent, to entrench and then spread democracy within individual countries, and to bind countries together in a way that spread prosperity. It was suggested that this first phase of European integration is now coming to a close with the moves to adopt the EU's constitution.

Moving forward from this position, it was clear to participants that Europe needs a new vision with which to connect to its citizens, and it must find a way of acting coherently on the global stage if it is to shape its future into a secure and sustainable form. At present, it does neither of these things well.

Transport Metaphors for Europe

Suggestions for transport metaphors for Europe included a convoy of oil tankers, or a horse and cart without the horse. The most developed metaphor was one suggested by Franck Biancheri of Europe 2020:

The European Union is like a giant bus carrying 500 million passengers. The bus has a cockpit which is sealed off from the passenger area, and which contains a giant steering wheel. Unfortunately the cockpit is occupied by 25 dwarves, who are squabbling with each other, attempting to pull the steering wheel in different directions, without any regard to what is happening outside. As a result, the bus is swerving wildly, discomforting the passengers, and damaging other road users. Increasingly there are calls to open the cockpit, to remove the technocratic elite, and to bring coherence.



Session 2: What are Europe's Goals?

This session saw participants discussing and grouping together the ideas that they considered should be Europe's goals, and then trying to select their top three goals within each group. Key themes to emerge included the value of solidarity in European societies as opposed to American individualism; the need to re-engage with citizens; the importance of taking responsibility for future generations and the planet as well as for Europe's past; and the need to show better leadership on both the European and World stages.

Inspiration

When the group brainstorm ideas were brought together and placed in similar categories, the old refrain of *liberté, égalité et fraternité* re-emerged as one possible leitmotiv for Europe:

- *Freedom* includes positive liberties such as the right to democratic governance, and also negative liberties including freedom from threat (security, prosperity), freedom from war (peace), and freedom from dictates of choice (diversity);
- *Co-operation* is a state of dynamic stability that balances equality and individualism: In changing (dynamic) circumstances Europe seeks to define a middle balance (stability) of individual and collective rights, avoiding the extremes of US individualism or Communist collectivism;
- *Solidarity* implies a welcoming of interdependency, a feeling of fraternity, and accepting responsibility for the consequences of actions, thus preserving future freedoms. It expresses hope of promoting a just and environmentally sustainable global community.

One key conclusion from this discussion was that Europe needs to live up to its values – at present it is uncoordinated and lacking in the ability to follow through. European values should be maintained rather than changed in the face of global competition. Instead, Europe should seek to be a better partner internationally through 'being the change it wishes to see'.

Session 3: What helps and hinders the EU in meeting its goals?

Firstly working in pairs, and then as a whole group, participants were asked to consider what lies between where we are and where we want to go. Responses were then grouped to provide an overview of the terrain which we must cross in order to better promote Europe's goals. Many more hindrances than helps were identified:

Hindrances

Europe is hindered by a prevalence of short term thinking, an inability to see how issues inter-relate systemically, and the lack of a leadership able to articulate a coherent sense of identity or global vision. This has led to a number of perverse outcomes with inconsistent policies, in an environment where the dominant economic theory is seen as having reduced the scope for political choice. The lack of accountability on the EU level has also contributed to a broader destruction of the polity, and a nexus is formed between economic vested interests and the media. At the same time the quality of education has degraded, and it is proving difficult to take advantage of diversity, which becomes an obstacle to progress.

Helps

Europe is helped in its undertaking in having experience of rule making and legal enforcement that goes beyond national frontiers. This has had to take account of the diversity of the EU.

Session 4: Opportunities for Action – Possible Project Probe Ideas

A key aspect of E3G’s methodology is the development of ‘probe’ ideas to analyse the opportunities available for action. Participants were asked to think up probes that would take into account the helps and hindrances to EU action, and which would help the EU to better reach its goals. The initial group ideas were then added to by individuals with particular interest in the different suggestions. The meeting identified ten probe areas, which are set out below:

1. Opening Closed Areas of EU Policy and incorporating enhanced SIA

The aim is to reinforce citizens’ ownership of the European project by making sure that all areas of policy (e.g. trade, competition) are subject to public parliamentary control and that Sustainable Impact Analyses are meaningful in their contents. The means would be to shift these issues from being considered executive to legislative matters, and ultimately a change of treaty. The partisans of this change could include the European Parliament and many lobbyists.

2. Shift Common Agricultural Policy budget to Climate Security

The aim is to switch a substantial chunk of resources from the CAP to climate security measures. The means would be to show climate security today poses the equivalent threat that food security posed in the 1950s. The partisans of this change could include those who would benefit from such a major budgetary shift, notably in energy and related technology industries, whilst alternatives would have to be found for farmers (especially in France).

3. Climate Security and Energy Security – EU engagement with key partner countries

The aim is to engage countries such as China, India and Brazil on climate security by approaching the issue from the energy security angle - something they are more concerned about. The means would be to build a package that includes offers of leapfrog technology and addresses the costs to public health. The partisans of this change could include the EU institutions and Member States, given their declared desire for a Common Foreign and Defence Policy (CFDP). Energy and related technology companies could also be interested.

4. Beyond Short-termism / ‘The Long Run’

The aim is to move political debate to consider long term concerns. The means would be to bring a group of scientists and politicians together to develop future scenarios. The partisans of this change could include firms that require a long time to amortise their investment costs.

5. Promoting Sustainability in the Middle East and North Africa

The aim is to draw the EU’s neighbourhood into the same kind of constructive dynamic as applicant countries. The means would be to develop a dialogue of civilisations dealing with the real security issues, notably sustainability. The partisans of this change could include EU institutions and Member States, given their declared desire for a CFDP.



6. Promotion of Systems Thinking

The aim is to embed systems thinking in political decision making, thus ensuring that the side effects of policy are equally taken into account. The means would be to provide tools and training for doing this to decision makers, and to run high profile experiments. The partisans of this change could include those who offer such services already.

7. Equipping Future EU Leaders

The aim is to groom a generation of sustainability minded Europeans to take control of the system as the baby boomers retire. The means would be similar to that used by US neo-conservatives, working together with selected individuals, providing training and a network of mutual support. The partisans of this change could include the likely beneficiaries.

8. Trans-European Political Party for 2009

The aim is to make the EU more democratic by offering a genuinely trans-European force capable of articulating political ideas. The means would be the creation of a party which is constituted only on the European and local – but not national – levels. The partisans of this change could include citizens and groups concerned with the promotion of EU democratisation.

9. Beyond the Constitution – an ongoing strategy for Europe

The aim is to give a vision of the future of Europe that can inspire and motivate its citizens. The means would be a large-scale multi-stakeholder process which is open to all and involves developing a consensus vision on what a future Europe should look like. The partisans of this change could include civil society groups and think tanks.

10. Managing Large Populations

The aim is to gain a better understanding of how to manage a multilingual and diverse EU of half a billion people effectively and democratically, and in the process to show international partners the EU's preparedness to learn. The means would be a series of meetings with partners from large countries (India, Brazil, and China). The partisans of this change could include those EU institutions and civil society groups involved in the fields of diversity, human rights and international cooperation.

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