



Europe is now in the hands of its citizens: let's dare for a new grand design on May 9th!

What should have been a huge celebration of 70 years of Schuman plan, the communitarisation of Coal & Steel that launched the European Integration in the fifties, may well turn into a tragedy: the European Peace Project may be a prominent victim of Covid 19. The European Union, and Europe as a whole, together with the most part of the world, went into the Covid19 crisis in an unfit shape.

Nearly a whole decade of crisis – banking crisis, austerity crisis, refugee crisis – has shown the European Union inability to act and to take common decisions. Solidarity was missing throughout a dramatic monetary and economic crisis that left millions behind and disappointed whole generations of Europeans, especially in the European South. The lack of solidarity and policy coordination took an outrageous dimension with every refugee ship debarking in Lampedusa. For the last decade the EU seems to have forgotten the basic idea of integration, that is to use every crisis for a leap forward and deeping through communitarisation. Instead, Heads of State and Governments, especially in some Member States, increasingly abused each and every crisis for more re-nationalisation, going-it-alone-strategies and the dismantling of democracy and rule of law. Covid-19 now has boosted all these tendencies. Europe is in acute »danger of death«, as former EU-Commission President Jacques Delors recently said. And we are all facing that danger now!

Europe is undergoing a symmetrical shock that needs a symmetrical, bold, common answer. Europe is and must remain a space of democracy, solidarity, unity and transparency. These leading principles for a common European answer to the crisis imply today the *equal treatment* of all European citizens as the guiding principle for European solidarity. Nobody must be left behind, independent of its national affiliation. The economic measure taken upon to build a #postCoronaEurope must serve, treat and benefit to all European citizens in the same way, without any national distinction being applied. This crisis is what ought to bring European citizens together!

This is why this year the 9th May Europe day is the European citizens' day, the day when the so far invisible sovereign of the European system will stand up and take over shaping jointly the new Union that will come out of the pandemia. Where politicians in the EU council want, again, to play a national game, European citizens and Civil society will stand united, undividable. This crisis should and must serve as the emergence of a full-fledged European citizenship!

Where the elites are failing, the citizens, civil society and cultural actors must take over. If the Covid-19 crisis has revealed one positive thing, it is that care and generosity between people based on common humanity still exists. This must form the basis of our renewed European democracy. On this day, the European Union was planning on launching the »Conference on the Future of Europe« and opening a new chapter in the history of integration following Brexit, but these plans have now been delayed.

What was under discussion again involved citizens and civil society in only the most marginal of ways, in a technocratic process dominated by governments and elected officials, must become a process of democratic innovation and unfold in multiple forms of citizen councils, and in renewed civic municipalism across the continent. The new European polity is no longer an EU Council, representing member states, but a horizontal structure of networked European citizens, building up and caring for Europe in their local constituencies.

We call on the rich networks of civil society across the continent to come together in a deliberative citizen-led process on the Future of Europe, amplifying voices often unheard in the European public debate. We need a transnational Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Europe built from the ground up and able to act as a counterweight to the other Institutions.

We may be physically-distanced one from another still for some time to come, but this distance must be bridged by our redoubled care, imagination and ambition for our common future, which is Europe as a collective destiny of history and future, a Europe more democratic, free, just, equal and green, than before Covid-19.

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