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Αποστολή: Παρασκευή, 17 Μαΐου 2013 12:04 μμ
Προς: [redacted]
Θέμα: Κείμενο
Συνημμένα: The future of the European Union.doc

Αγαπητέ μου κ. Πρόεδρε,

Spinelli

Σας επισυνάπτω σχέδιο άρθρου για το οποίο μιλήσαμε. Πρωσπάθησα να συνδιάσω την ανάγκη για ένα σύνταγμα για την Ευρώπη που υποστηρίζει το Spinelli Group και την ανάγκη για νέες πολιτικές που θα απαντούν στα προβλήματα των πολιτών και θα επαυδέουν την Κοινωνία με την ΕΕ.

Τακης Ιωακ...

*Αρχείο
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The future of the European Union

The greatest challenge, much greater perhaps than the economic crisis, facing the European Union at the moment is how to reconnect itself with the European society and its citizens. Nearly four years of economic crisis, bailout programmes and severe austerity policies have sapped public trust in the European Union and its institutions both in the countries of Southern and Northern Europe. The ~~former~~ ^{citizens} bitterly complain for the drastic reduction of living standards, the rising unemployment and social dislocation while the ~~latter~~ ^{institution} resist the perceived waste of money to bail out the ailing countries of the South. The net result is that the legitimacy of the Union has suffered a terrible erosion as successive opinion polls demonstrate. If not corrected, the growing legitimacy deficit could pose an existential threat to the European Union. The elections for the European Parliament next year is likely to be an acid test for the European Union and the prospects for its survival, if all sorts of Eurosceptic, populist forces and colourful characters capture the only representative body of the EU.

So what needs to be done?

There are plenty of ideas floating around. Some of them stress the need for deep institutional reforms as a necessary step to engage the European society and citizens with the integration process and thus narrow the democratic deficit. Some others focus on the policy dimension maintaining that what is needed is a different policy mix capable of addressing the mounting concerns of the European citizens, namely diminishing living standards, economic recession, unemployment. Still some others assert that the problem lies essentially in the communication gaps and therefore the European Union institution need to develop a more effective communication strategy to reach the European citizens.

We firmly believe that we need a multi-dimensional, incremental strategy to address the legitimacy deficit, tackle the economic crisis, answer the ultimate question "what kind of Europe do we want;" and eventually secure the long term prospects of the European integration project. First, no doubt we need to overhaul the European Union institutions so that to render them more democratic, transparent,

visible, understandable by the ordinary European citizens. We need in other words a full fledged European Constitution to provide the means, instruments and processes that would enable the European citizens to identify with the European political system. We certainly need a legitimate, supranational European government “from the people by the people for the people”. It is imperative to ensure that all European institutions be underpinned by explicit popular backing which would flow from the direct involvement of the citizens in the process of shaping these institutions either through the electoral process or otherwise. To establish such a constitutional political regime, we certainly need a comprehensive amendment of the European Treaties (Treaty of Lisbon). But is the right time for embarking on such a revision process? We are afraid no, the political conditions on the ground, the state of public opinion across Europe, country-specific problems(in UK, France and elsewhere) render highly doubtful the success of a revision exercise for the foreseeable future. So what we need to focus on is to carefully prepare the content for the big revision which might actually culminate in a new Social Contract and new forms of solidarity for the members of the EU. But more than that we need to shape the political conditions for a successful outcome. Shaping these conditions constitutes the second component in our multi-dimensional approach. No matter how important the institutional restructuring the European Union might be, it is not going by itself to eliminate the legitimacy deficit and bring European society closer to the EU. Citizens care more about policy outputs and much less about institutional, procedural arrangements, though there is a dialectical relationship between these two.

So let's start with the policies. Adjusting and developing European policies in the direction of meeting the citizens' pressing anxieties could contribute decisively to creating the proper conditions for a wholesale reform of the Treaties and at the same time immediately narrow the democratic deficit. In doing so we need to make sure that the European Union evolves in such a manner that the ordinary citizen would be able to perceive it as “a welfare –maximizing system”. For the sad fact is that a vast majority of citizens both in Northern and Southern Europe tend to view the Union more as a threat to their welfare rather than as a multiplier. This needs to urgently be corrected primarily through the adjustment of policies. In particular we could exploit all the possibilities offered by the existing treaties, and there are many, for first and foremost completing the economic and monetary union(EMU). Banking union in its three pillars(single supervisory regime, single resolution mechanism and a single

guarantee scheme), fiscal union and eventually economic union can be advanced on the basis of the existing treaties. At the same time a more ambitious growth and employment strategy combined with a more balanced macroeconomic policy which would spread the cost of adjustment to all member states need to be immediately implemented. This together with a set of smaller programmes tailored to alleviate the plight of certain social groups(minorities, homeless, e.ct) gravely hit by the economic crisis and the austerity policies could help improve the climate for the next big constitutional move.

This is our sequential strategy for addressing the challenges facing the future of Europe. Before launching the constitutional process we need as a first step to put in place the policy actions that would allow the Union to exit the economic recession and regain the citizens' confidence. This would hopefully create the preconditions for the second step, a comprehensive treaty amendment with the ultimate objective of turning the European Union or failing that the Eurozone into a democratic political union .Needless to say that in order to achieve that the revision process must cover not only the upgrading of the institutional framework but also the strengthening of the policies. But as long as the economic recession and the current high levels of unemployment persist, it will be suicidal to open the revision process.

With the European elections just a few months away we can launch a pan-European debate on the future of Europe on the basis however of a well defined plan of priorities along the lines sketched out above.