

Kolloquium der Europäischen Assoziation zu dem Thema

„Die Herausforderungen der Demokratie im Zeitalter der Globalisierung. Wie können die demokratischen Institutionen und die Partizipation der Menschen gestärkt werden?“

(Brüssel, 13.11.2014)

Wie üblich wurde auch dieses Kolloquium in unserer Vereinigung inhaltlich vorbereitet, und zwar von einer Arbeitsgruppe unter Leitung von Roland A. Kohn, die sich am 15. Januar 2014 auf eine gemeinsame Position verständigte (Text A – S. 1-4).

Diese Position wurde nach einigen Änderungen auf dem Studientag der Vereinigung am 6. Mai in Berlin gutgeheißen. Darauf basierend hat unsere Vereinigung eine Reihe von Änderungen (Amendments) zu dem neuesten Deklarationsentwurf¹ am 9. Mai auf den Weg gebracht. (Text B – S. 5-6.)

Ein Vergleich der deutschen Position und der Amendments mit der am 13. November von der Europäischen Assoziation angenommenen „Deklaration von Brüssel“ verdeutlicht, dass in diese „Erklärung“ vieles von uns eingeflossen ist. (s. Text C – S. 7-9)

Text A: Deutsche Position

The European Association of Former Parliamentarians:

- Thanks the European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA) for hosting the Colloquy in the framework of the European Parliament, the EU's major instrument for scrutinizing democracy.

- Recalls that its work is entirely in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, with the European Convention on Human Rights of the Council of Europe (1950), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the UN (1966) and the Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1997.

- Emphasizes that the Brussels Colloquy aims in particular at the strengthening of democratic institutions and the participation of citizens. As such, its goal is to attract attention to the difficulties encountered in the context created by globalization and by the new global equilibrium resulting in particular from the development of emerging countries.

Teil I: Declaration / Recommendations

- Die in einem langen historischen Prozess in weiten Teilen Europas bereits durchgesetzte Lebensform Demokratie hat sich mittlerweile zu einem universellen Wert entwickelt. Viele Menschen auf der Welt setzen ihre Hoffnung auf ein besseres und selbstbestimmtes Leben darein, daß das demokratische Ideal von uns Europäern kraftvoll im sich dramatisch wandelnden internationalen Kräftefeld vertreten wird.
- Demokratie ist nach unserem Verständnis mehr als ein Regierungssystem. Die demokratische Ordnung orientiert sich am Grundwert der Menschenwürde, am Prinzip der Herrschaft des Volkes durch das Volk und für das Volk, an einer freiheitlichen Rechtsordnung und im wirtschaftlichen Bereich am Leitbild einer sozialen, ökologischen und nachhaltigen Marktwirtschaft.
- Zu den Werten der europäischen Demokratien zählen insbesondere die unantastbare Würde des Menschen, Freiheit, Rechtsstaatlichkeit, die Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter, Solidarität und soziale Gerechtigkeit, der Schutz der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen, Toleranz, Religionsfreiheit, die Wahrung der Menschenrechte einschl. des Respekts für Minderheiten sowie kulturelle Vielfalt.
- Zu den dauerhaften Herausforderungen für die Demokratie gehört es auch, „Anti-Werten“ wie Rassismus, Fremdenfeindlichkeit, Antisemitismus, religiösem Fanatismus und Chauvinismus entgegenzutreten.

¹ Vom Generalberichterstatter der Europäischen Assoziation, dem Franzosen Jean-Pierre Fourré, vorgelegt.

- Too often confronted with various interpretations with reference to traditions, religions and the political regime, democracy is far from having won in many of the world's countries. But the future of representative democracy cannot be dependent on the specific situations of each country.
- The former parliamentarians are convinced that a unified and structured Europe is in a position to rise to the challenges of globalisation not only in the economic and social, but also in the political and legal fields.
- In einem demokratischen Repräsentativsystem ist das Parlament das „Herz“ der politischen Ordnung. Deshalb muß es wieder zum zentralen Forum des gesellschaftlichen und politischen Diskurses werden und seine anderen Aufgaben, wie Gesetzgebung, Budgethoheit, Kontrolle der Regierung, Wahlfunktionen und Mitwirkung an der Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik, kraftvoll und verantwortungsbewusst wahrnehmen.
- Democracy is exercised by the periodic holding of free and fair elections allowing the public will to be expressed. These elections must be held on the basis of universal suffrage, so that all voters can choose their representatives in conditions of equality, openness and transparency. That's why civil and political rights are essential and, more specifically, the rights to vote and to be elected, the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, access to information, and the right to organise political parties and engage in political activities. The validity of a blank vote in any election must be acknowledged.
- Damit die Idee der repräsentativen Demokratie ihre Strahlkraft behält, bedarf es der Öffnung des politischen Systems für eine stärkere Bürgerbeteiligung sowie einer Offensive zur politischen Bildung.
- Citizens' knowledge of decisions is a key element of democratic life. This supposes impartial and complete information covering both sides of the argument. Therefore some measures could be adopted like the publication of the proceedings of the EU Council of Ministers when it deliberates on legislative acts as does the European Parliament.
- Die heute verfügbaren interaktiven Medien können einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Modernisierung und Ergänzung der repräsentativen Demokratie leisten durch mehr Transparenz und Bereitstellung unaufwendiger Mittel zur Mitwirkung und Beteiligung.
- Das Europäische Parlament und die nationalen Parlamente sollten die Chance nutzen, noch intensiver miteinander zu kooperieren und Erfahrungen auszutauschen. Beispielhaft seien in diesem Zusammenhang das Instrument der Online-Petition im britischen Unterhaus oder die Institution des Wehrbeauftragten im Deutschen Bundestag genannt. Auf europäischer Ebene sollte etwa die Europäische Bürgerinitiative durch Einbeziehung des Europäischen Parlaments fortentwickelt werden.
- Das Europäische Parlament sollte auch dadurch gestärkt werden, dass die Institution eines unabhängigen EU-Grundrechtebeauftragten geschaffen wird, der vom Europäischen Parlament zu wählen ist.
- Von ähnlicher Bedeutung für die demokratische Architektur Europas ist die Stärkung der Befugnisse der Parlamentarischen Versammlung des Europarates.
- Angesichts der Tatsache, dass immer mehr Entscheidungskompetenzen aus dem Gestaltungsspielraum nationaler Verantwortung auswandern, ist die Schaffung einer „United Nations Parliamentary Assembly“ bedenkenswert.
- Die Legitimität eines demokratischen Gemeinwesens darf nicht dadurch geschwächt werden, dass dessen Staatsbürgerschaft durch ein Sicheinkaufen erworben werden kann.
- Zu den größten Herausforderungen demokratischer Gemeinwesen zählt heute die Herstellung einer ausgewogenen Balance zwischen Freiheit und informationeller Selbstbestimmung des Einzelnen einerseits und dem Schutz- und Sicherheitsbedürfnis der Gesellschaft andererseits.
- Zu diesen Herausforderungen zählen aber auch die Verwirklichung der Gleichberechtigung, der wirksame Schutz von Minderheiten und die Ermöglichung fairer Teilhabe am gesellschaftlichen Leben.
- Die schwierige Lage gerade auch junger Menschen in manchen Staaten Europas im Hinblick auf den Zugang zu beruflicher Bildung sowie zum Arbeitsmarkt stellt eine langfristige Bedrohung für die Legitimität demokratischer Gemeinwesen dar.

Teil II: Explanatory Memorandum

- In den letzten Jahren ist zunehmend das Phänomen der Demokratiemüdigkeit festzustellen, wie tendenziell sinkende Wahlbeteiligungen ausweisen. In manchen Kreisen in Europa ist es Mode geworden, auf den demokratischen Prozess mit seinen legitimierenden Verfahren verächtlich herabzusehen.
- Selbst die Infragestellung der Demokratie ganz grundsätzlich wird inzwischen offen propagiert. So vertreten Intellektuelle, darunter politische Philosophen und Wirtschafts-Nobelpreisträger die Auffassung, dass ein meritokratisches System vorzuziehen sei, und dass die Demokratie ungeeignet sei, wirtschaftliche Entwicklungsprozesse von Staaten zu steuern. In jüngsten Umfragen bekennen sich erschreckend viele gerade auch junge Menschen als Demokratiegegner. Solche Tendenzen in der Mitte der Gesellschaft müssen alarmieren und fordern uns zu entschlossenem Handeln dagegen auf.
- Hinter solchen Haltungen verbirgt sich eine Geringschätzung des legitimierenden und damit pazifizierenden Verfahrens „one man – one vote“. Das Prinzip Legitimation von Entscheidungen durch vereinbarte Verfahren würde dabei abgelöst vom Prinzip Legitimation durch „erwünschte“ Ergebnisse. Das aber bedeutete die Gefahr eines Rückfalls in eskalierende Konfliktformen, wenn jeweilige Ergebnisse nicht von allen akzeptiert werden.
- Die jüngsten Problemfälle in Sachen Demokratie zeigen, wie hilflos die EU immer noch dasteht, wenn in einem ihrer Mitgliedstaaten demokratische und rechtsstaatliche Grundprinzipien in Bedrängnis geraten. Zwar kann einer Regierung das Stimmrecht in den EU-Gremien entzogen werden – aber nur dann, wenn die übrigen Staats- und Regierungschefs einstimmig beschließen, dass eine schwerwiegende und anhaltende Verletzung der gemeinsamen Werte vorliegt. Wirksamer wäre es, die Institution eines unabhängigen EU-Grundrechtebeauftragten zu schaffen. Damit der Grundrechtebeauftragte über ein entsprechendes politisches Gewicht gegenüber der Europäischen Union und ihren Mitgliedstaaten verfügt, sollte er vom Europäischen Parlament mit Zweidrittelmehrheit und für eine Amtszeit, die über die Dauer der Legislaturperiode des Europäischen Parlament deutlich hinausreicht, gewählt werden und bei seiner Arbeit sowohl mit dem Menschenrechtskommissar des Europarates kooperieren als auch von der in Wien ansässigen EU-Grundrechteagentur unterstützt werden.
- Die Parlamentarische Versammlung des Europarats hat sich im Laufe ihrer Geschichte von einer „beratenden“ zu einer „parlamentarischen“ Versammlung entwickelt und dabei Kompetenzen hinzugewonnen. Dennoch sind Defizite zu beklagen, und zwar bei der Wahlfunktion und dem Budgetrecht. So wählen bislang ihre Mitglieder den Generalsekretär des Europarats und auch die Richter des Europäischen Menschenrechtsgerichtshofes gemäß den Vorschlägen des Ministerkomitees bzw. der Mitgliedstaaten. Die demokratische Struktur Europas würde gestärkt, wenn auch die Parlamentarische Versammlung ein Vorschlagsrecht für die Wahl des Generalsekretärs und der Richter erhielte (vorzugsweise mit einer Zweidrittelmehrheit). Da bislang keine Budgethoheit der Parlamentarischen Versammlung besteht, sollten ihr mehr Mitsprache- und Entscheidungsrechte über das eigene Budget zugestanden werden.
- Es gilt, die Chancen und Risiken der Digitalisierung sorgfältig abzuwägen; interaktive Medien sind grundsätzlich geeignet, mehr Transparenz herzustellen und nicht aufwendige Formen der Partizipation zu fördern. Interaktive Medien können auch von den Parlamenten genutzt werden, wieder stärker in das Zentrum der gesellschaftlichen Debatte zu rücken.
- Bisher boten ausschließlich Nationalstaaten das Gehäuse für demokratische Regierungssysteme. Die Steuerungsfähigkeit von Nationalstaaten in der globalisierten Welt hat indessen stark nachgelassen. Transnationale Zusammenschlüsse leiden jedoch unter mehr oder weniger defizitären demokratischen Strukturen. In diesem Zusammenhang ist unter dem Prinzip der Subsidiarität die Kompetenzverteilung zwischen Nationalstaaten und transnationalen Zusammenschlüssen neu zu bedenken.
- Der behutsame Ausbau partizipatorischer Elemente steht nicht im Widerspruch zur Idee der repräsentativen Demokratie, wie das Beispiel der Bürgerhaushalte in vielen Kommunen zeigt.

- Die Herstellung weitestgehender materieller Gleichheit der Bürger in einem Gemeinwesen wird von manchen Politikwissenschaftlern als Wesensmerkmal der Demokratie verstanden. Diese Position jedoch führt dazu, dass der Zusammenhang zwischen freier Eigenleistung und materiellem Erfolg aufgebrochen wird; die grundlegenden Freiheitsrechte geraten so in Gefahr.
- Außerhalb der Institutionen der repräsentativen Demokratie haben sich in den letzten Jahren neue soziale Bewegungen herausgebildet. Diese Bürger wieder für die Idee der repräsentativen Demokratie zu gewinnen ist eine wichtige Aufgabe.
- Die Globalisierung und die damit einhergehende Freizügigkeit von Kapital, Produkten und Arbeit hat erhebliche Konsequenzen für die Fähigkeit demokratischer Politik, die Lebenswelt der Bürger zu gestalten; insbesondere der Spielraum des nationalen Staates zur Regulierung ökonomischer Prozesse hat sich verkleinert. Wenigstens europäische Regelwerke sind deshalb erforderlich, auf deren Grundlage Vereinbarungen mit den anderen bedeutenden Wirtschaftsräumen angestrebt werden können.
- Banken- und Staatsschuldenkrise haben einerseits internationale Finanzinstitutionen, andererseits aber auch private Institutionen wie Ratingagenturen mächtig gemacht. Internationale Vereinbarungen über deren Regulierung sind geboten.
- Die Forderung nach einer parlamentarischen Kontrolle internationaler Einrichtungen wie IWF, Weltbank, WTO etc. birgt in sich das Risiko einer Politisierung sachlich regulierter Aufgabenstellungen. Nichts spricht jedoch gegen eine Begleitung solcher Einrichtungen durch – zum Teil schon bestehende – Netzwerke von Abgeordneten und institutionalisierte parlamentarische Gremien.
- Die Forderung, politische Mechanismen zu entwickeln, um Staatsschulden leichter streichen zu können, ruft das „moral hazard“-Problem hervor und führt tendenziell zur Verfestigung eines wenig verantwortungsbewussten Verhaltens der Staaten. Derartige Forderungen sind deshalb strikt abzulehnen.

TEXT B

German Association

Amendments (9 May 2014) to the DRAFT BRUSSELS DECLARATION

Presented by Mr Jean-Pierre FOURRE

The proposed amendments are in 'bold' and 'underlined', where adding or modifying, and in 'strikethrough', where deleting text.

A - A FOUNDATION OF SHARED VALUES: THE BASIS OF DEMOCRACY

Amendment 1

First paragraph

- Democracy is a **universally recognised** ideal **as well as a goal**, based on **common** values shared by all the peoples on the planet, regardless of cultural, political, social or economic differences. **These values include, in particular, the inviolability of human dignity, freedom, respect for human rights, the rule of law, gender equality, solidarity and social justice, protection of the natural foundations of life, tolerance, religious freedom, respect for minorities, cultural diversity and peace.**

Democracy **– the government of the people, by the people and for the people –** is based on essential principles

B - SOME OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY ARE CHALLENGED BY GLOBALISATION

Amendment 2

Globalisation is challenging some of the foundations of democracy in its 'earlier' definition:

- The rapid surge in new information **and communication** technologies ...*[the French text is correct]*

Amendment 3

- The sovereign debts crisis ... under their supervision. **Therefore Europe must set priority to regain economic competitiveness on a global scale.**

Amendment 4

- ~~Alongside the horizons it is opening up (swifter communication, international aid, promotion of trade), globalisation is increasing the constraints on the autonomy of States in a context where, internationally, the necessary institutional conditions do not exist for the exercise of democracy.~~

Amendment 5

- Faced with the plurality and diversity of power structures, citizens are taking some over. **Recent protests and rebellions** have highlighted the ever greater influence of social networks; plurality of opinions is being expressed outside the representative institutions.

PROPOSALS

Amendment 6

1. ... These elections must be held on the basis of universal, **equal and secret** suffrage ... be acknowledged.

~~We also propose that the issues of voting by immigrants be examined by each State on the basis of the rights of free movement of persons and of human rights.~~

The legitimacy of a democratic community must not be weakened by allowing citizenship to be purchased.

Amendment 7

2. We propose ... public expression. **To ensure that the idea of representative democracy retains its appeal, we need to open up the political system to permit greater public participation, and to launch a campaign to promote civic education. The interactive media available today can make a key contribution to modernising and supplementing representative democracy by boosting transparency and providing simple channels for involvement and participation.** ...

Amendment 8

3) We propose the creation of advisory boards to public administrations accompanied by relevant transparency legislation ...

Amendment 9

4) ... the whole Community. We therefore propose that the citizens' initiative should be relaunched and developed further by involving the European Parliament.

Amendment 10

Add three new paragraphs after 4

4.a) The European Parliament should also be strengthened by creating the post of an independent EU representative for fundamental rights, to be elected by the European Parliament.

4.b) It is of similar importance for Europe's democratic architecture that the powers of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe be strengthened by giving the Assembly the right to nominate candidates for the election of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the judges of the European Court of Human Rights, and by providing it with additional consultation and decision-making rights regarding its own budget.

4.c) One of the challenges to be resolved by parliaments is to ensure a proper balance between freedom and the right of the individual to determine the use of his or her data, the need to protect the dignity of other individuals and the community as such and ensure its security.

Amendment 11

5) We propose that the major decisions concerning the population be taken after consultation and not by **faceless** unelected bodies ...

Amendment 12

7) ~~We reaffirm the proposal of the 'Athens Declaration' of 18 October 2008, which recalls that participatory democracy must be exercised at all levels, local, national and between States. A cautious expansion of participatory elements at all levels does not run counter to representative democracy. However, we reaffirm that the political heart of democracy is the parliament (see the 'Declaration of Malta' of 2 November 2012). Parliaments must therefore strengthen or regain its position as the central forum for public and political debate, and perform its other main functions – such as the passage of legislation, adoption of the budget, scrutiny of the government's work, its elective powers, and involvement in foreign and security policy – effectively and responsibly.~~

Amendment 13

8) ... We therefore propose that the major financial institutions, IMF, WTO and World Bank, **the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development** be subject – if not yet done – to the constant parliamentary **monitoring** [*in French: au suivi parlementaire*] of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and of the European Parliament.

Amendment 14

10) As the sovereign debt ... destabilisation of democratic regimes.

The call for political mechanisms to be developed to make it easier to write off government debt must be rejected, because they would tend to encourage irresponsible behaviour by states.

TEXT C

THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION. HOW TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND THE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLES

DECLARATION OF BRUSSELS (13.11.2014)

Approved by the delegates representing the members of the European Association of former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe

The European Association of Former Parliamentarians of the member states of the Council of Europe:

- thanks the European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA) for hosting the Colloquy in the premises of the European Parliament, the only EU institution elected directly by the people, the EU's major instrument for scrutinising democracy, and the body for deliberation on Community legislation.
- recalls that its work is entirely in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, the Council of Europe European Convention on Human Rights (1950), the United Nations International Pact on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1997 as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.
- emphasises that the Brussels Colloquy aims in particular at the strengthening of democratic institutions and the participation of citizens. The principles of liberty and the respect of human rights must be respected by the governments. This colloquy's goal is to attract attention to the need for a totally new global equilibrium based on democracy and taking account of the effects of globalisation and the development of emerging countries.

A FEW REMINDERS

A – A FOUNDATION OF SHARED VALUES: THE BASIS OF DEMOCRACY

– Democracy is an ideal as well as a goal, based on fundamental values shared by all open-minded peoples on the planet, regardless of cultural, political, social or economic differences. It is founded on values such as the inviolability of human dignity, freedom, respect for human rights, the rule of law, gender equality, solidarity and social justice, protection of natural foundation of life, tolerance, freedom of religious belief, respect for minorities, cultural diversity, and peace.

– Democracy – the government of the people, by the people and for the people – is based on essential principles: the individual participation and responsibility of citizens, which implies the existence of representative institutions at all decisional levels. Democracy comprises social, economic and cultural parameters which facilitate free and equal political choice for all and unrestricted freedom of expression and of the media.

– The future of democracy cannot be dependent on the specific situations of each country. We observe that, too often confronted with various interpretations with reference to traditions, religions and the political regime, in many of the world's countries, democracy is far from being successful.

– In the conclusions of our Rome Declaration of 30 November 2002 on 'Shared European values underpinning European construction':

"The former parliamentarians are convinced that a unified and structured Europe is in a position to rise to the challenges of globalisation not only in the economic and social, but also in the political and legal fields. Globalisation of democratic values must be promoted as well as a social and ecological market economy where sustainable human development and the rights of future generations form the reference point of a global politics offering a decent life to all human beings of the present and future generations."

B – SOME OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY ARE CHALLENGED BY GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is challenging some of the foundations of democracy in its 'earlier' definition:

- The rapid surge in new information and communication technologies, and particularly of the Internet, has allowed access to the 'global village'.

However, abuse and manipulation are blatant in many fields such as the challenging of the protection of privacy, identity theft and all forms of digital criminality. Transgressions originating in States themselves can also happen in these fields.

- The debts crisis has highlighted the decisive influence of the intervention of international financial institutions and of rating agencies, which crystallizes the feeling citizens have of interference in and supervision over national affairs, and even of being placed under regulation

Alongside the positive horizons that are opening up (e.g. swifter communication, international aid, promotion of trade...), globalisation is increasing the constraints on the autonomy of States and groupings of States in a context where, internationally, the necessary institutional conditions do not exist for the exercise of democracy.

– Faced with intransparency and complexity of power structures, citizens wish to participate in decision-making. The recent protests and rebellions have highlighted the ever greater influence of social networks; plurality of opinions is being expressed to a greater extent outside the representative institutions.

PROPOSALS

1. The role of political institutions and of their representatives is decisive in creating and sustaining a democratic framework in each country, locally, regionally, nationally and also at the inter-State level.

Yet the importance of elections today appears ever more limited, especially regarding social and economic issues where those in power appear to have the least room for manoeuvre. The rise in the abstention rate can be explained largely by this feeling of incapacity. However, the correct operation of democracy requires electoral participation of a significant if not massive scale.

We recall that the key element in the exercise of democracy is the periodic holding of free and fair elections with secret balloting being guaranteed to ensure the people's will is expressed. These elections must be held on the basis of universal suffrage so that voters can choose their representatives in conditions of equality, openness and transparency. Therefore civil and political rights are essential, and more specifically the rights to vote and to be elected, the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, access to information and the right to organise political parties and carry out political activities.

2. We propose strengthening the representative democratic institutions by adapting them to the new context, for example by taking account of the emergence of social networks, which now compete with the traditional forms of public expression. To ensure that the idea of representative democracy retains its appeal, we need to open up the political system to permit greater public participation, and to launch a campaign to promote civic education. The interactive media available today can make a key contribution to modernising and supplementing representative democracy by boosting transparency and providing simple channels for involvement and participation. The legitimacy of a democratic community must not be weakened by allowing citizenship to be purchased. We propose at the same time starting work in our association to define the new instruments to be implemented with a view to a concrete roll-out of participatory democracy including the new techniques of communication.

3. To be considered fully democratic a power must be subject to oversight systems. We propose the implementation of advisory boards to public administrations at all levels, framed by legislation on transparency, in order to prevent the corruption and influence of pressure groups of whatever kind. We also propose that the organisation, financial management, funding and ethics of political parties be duly regulated in an impartial manner to ensure the integrity of democratic processes as recalled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in its Universal Declaration on Democracy of 16 September 1997, and that the rights to access information on the activities of elected representatives be acknowledged.

4. The right of citizens' initiative has been recognised at the European level by the Treaty of Lisbon by enabling a million citizens to submit a proposal for a European legal act necessary to implement the Treaties, but the Commission keeps the power to decide on the opportunity of going forward with said initiative. In no case can the European Parliament evade its historic role of driving force in the European construction process. It remains the place of popular sovereignty across the whole European Union.

We therefore propose that the European Parliament facilitate a relaunch of the citizens' initiative laid down by the Treaty of Lisbon and initiate a reform of the citizens' initiative.

5. The European Parliament should also be strengthened by creating the post of an independent EU representative for fundamental rights, to be elected by the European Parliament.

6. It is of similar importance for Europe's democratic architecture that the powers of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe be strengthened by giving the Assembly the right to nominate candidates for the election

of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the judges of the European Court of Human Rights, and by providing it with additional consultation and decision-making rights regarding its own budget.

7. One of the challenges to be resolved by parliaments is to ensure a proper balance between freedom and the right of the individual to determine the use of his or her data, the need to protect the dignity, privacy and reputation of other individuals and the community as such and ensure its security.

8. We propose that the major decisions concerning the population be taken after consultation and not by unelected bodies over which, and it's the most worrisome aspect, citizens feel even those governing them no longer have any influence. Citizen expertise must be able to be exercised fully, in particular by guaranteed access to prior objective information especially regarding public projects. These consultations represent an essential offering of participatory democracy. These decisions can concern for instance the infrastructure in the respective countries, where applicable beyond the borders, the construction of roads, electrical networks, etc.

9. Citizens' knowledge of decisions is a key element of democratic life. This supposes impartial and complete information with an open debate.

We propose that the participation of citizens in public life, and especially their rights to education and knowledge, be recognised and their roll-out promoted; for example : some measures could be adopted like the publication of the proceedings of the EU Council when it deliberates on legislative acts as does the European Parliament.

10. A cautious expansion of participatory elements at all levels does not run counter to representative democracy. However, we reaffirm that the political heart of democracy is the parliament as we stated in our 'Declaration of Malta' of 2 November 2012. Parliaments must therefore strengthen or regain their position as the central forum for public and political debate, and perform its other main functions effectively and responsibly – such as the passage of legislation, adoption of the budget, scrutiny of the government's work, its elective powers, and involvement in foreign and security policy.

11. The globalisation of democracy must impose itself on the globalisation of the economy. If the desire is to increase the capacity of citizens to exercise a certain power over phenomena developing at the global level without their involvement, new modes of political organisation must be set in place internationally and account must be taken of the new societal requirements demanding more democracy, transparency and integrity of financial markets. In any case Europe must set priority to regain economic competitiveness on a global scale. We therefore propose that States support the creation of a Parliamentary Assembly of the United Nations e.g. supervising the major financial institutions, IMF and World Bank, so as to promote progress of world governance along a democratic track. There must be a clear and transparent monitoring of the role played by the WTO. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should also monitor the European Investment Bank (EIB) as it is done by the European Parliament.

12. As the debt of advanced countries has reached unprecedented levels, its impact on growth is today more uncertain than previously and therefore affects the democratic balance of the countries concerned and also of all the world's countries.