

## **Federalism would bring Europe 'closer to the people', says MEP candidate**

Written by Pietro De Matteis on 9 May 2014 in News  
News

With citizens' trust in EU falling, and Eurosceptics playing on 'fears and dissatisfaction', Pietro De Matteis says now is the time for a more 'social Europe'.



It took the worst crisis since the 1930s, five long years of austerity and a constant EU-bashing by our national politicians to hide the failures of their own policies, but finally it happened: the citizens' trust in the European project crumbled.

As if that was not enough, by opposing any significant reform towards a more democratic union, our politicians paved the way to the rebirth of nationalist movements across the continent. Bravo.

Similarly to an old house hit by a severe storm - call it crisis if you wish -, Europe urgently needs a throughout renovation to remain habitable for future generations. At a time when nationalists and Eurosceptics are riding the fears and the dissatisfaction resulted from the crisis in order to obtain votes, it has become crucial for each one of us to come out and take the responsibility to ensure that

future generations of Europeans can benefit - as we did - from a high quality of life, mobility, peace and, more importantly, hope.

Hope in a better future. Hope has become a very scarce resource in today's Europe, where youth unemployment has reached about 25 per cent in the EU and 50 to 55 per cent in Greece and Spain. If youth is the basis of our future, a hopeless youth translates in a hopeless future. This is something that we cannot accept.

Clearly the way the crisis has been managed and the related social and economic costs justify the questioning of the policies that have been implemented and the method of implementation. In other words, it has become clear to all Europeans that we need to change course. The question is which path to take.

In some ways, today's Europe looks much like a car who is running straight against a thick wall. A wall made of Europe's decreasing competitiveness, of its structural and institutional inefficiencies, and of the rise of new powers and of new global challenges. The problem is that the politicians currently in power are behaving as they always did.

Even the cleverest ones argue that significant changes are not possible now, and we will have to wait another 20 to 30 years. But the world will not wait for Europe to fix its own problems. Nor can today's and tomorrow's generations of young Europeans wait.

On the other hand, you have nationalists, who indeed have noticed some of the problems affecting today's Europe and feel the need to act. However, what they are doing is giving the wrong answers to the good questions asked by the people. Leaving the EU, re-establishing internal frontiers, and leaving the euro which is like pressing the accelerator of Europe's decline.

Luckily now there is a third way. In stark contrast with a dangerous 'business-as-usual' scenario proposed by mainstream parties, or with the 'suicidal' instinct animating nationalists and Eurosceptics, Europe can count on pragmatic-dreamers who believe that the only way to tackle today's and tomorrow's challenges is by building a better Europe.

"We need a new Europe-wide 'social contract' as it is now clear that our countries are not anymore able to guarantee growth and jobs as they did in the past"

It is naive to think that we can tackle 21st century challenges with 19th century tools. We need a new level above national levels. We need Europe, but it must be more democratic. We want a Europe that is closer to the people and their expectations. A Europe with a positive vision for the future and in which Europeans could recognise themselves.

This new vision can only be built together with Europeans from across the continent sharing their concerns and proposing common solutions. We need a new Europe-wide 'social contract' as it is now clear that our countries are not anymore able to guarantee growth and jobs as they did in the past.

At the same time Europe has not yet had the democratic mandate to do so. This is creating an enormous capability-expectation gap in peoples mind that is either alienating them from politics, as proved by the high abstention rate even at local elections, or is pushing the electorate towards the extremes.

What Europeans are asking us is a more 'social Europe' protecting mobile workers, students and job-seekers and reducing social dumping. A Europe that they feel they can shape, hence more democratic

thanks to an elected president and a bicameral parliament. A Europe that is able to facilitate the life of SMEs and where our industry can compete in the global market.

A Europe that is attentive to youth employment and key sectors such as energy, transport and research. A Europe that is an effective foreign policy actor thanks to a truly European diplomacy and army. Unfortunately, what we are getting as citizens is still quite far from the above, and with the crisis Europe has been increasingly associated with the implementation of austerity policies.

To fill this gap between what Europeans want and what the EU is providing today, the European Federalist Party (EFP) pushing other political parties to engage in a debate on Europe, hence developing a pan-European political public space. By federating the federalist in Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy and Portugal the EFP launched in Brussels on 5 May Europe's first transnational list for the European Elections. As an Italian living in Brussels, I am second in Belgium in the list 'Stand Up for the United States of Europe'; a list composed exclusively by young people under 37 years old.

We believe that changing Europe is not just wishful thinking. It is now possible, necessary and urgent. Europeans can finally vote for another Europe. But we have to act now. If Jean Monnet, one of the fathers of today's Europe, was with us today, he would tell us that we took enough 'small steps'.

It is now time to run if we do not want to miss our meeting with history. Current and future generations of Europeans will not excuse our inaction and will hold us accountable. What will you say to your grandchildren if you did not even try to change things?

### **About the author**

Pietro De Matteis is co-president of the European Federalist Party (EFP)



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