

**COMMITTEE OF WISE PERSONS ESTABLISHED BY THE
PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES**

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Final Report

STATE AND PROSPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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INTRODUCTION

From 12 February to 31 August 2016 a **public consultation** entitled “*The state and prospects of the European Union*”¹ was held, promoted by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Laura Boldrini, focusing on the issues raised in the *Declaration “Greater European integration: the way forward”*. The Declaration, which was intended to lend new impetus to European integration, was signed on 14 September 2015 at Montecitorio Palace by the Presidents of the Lower Houses of the Parliaments of Italy, France and Germany and of the Parliament of Luxembourg, subsequently joined by the Speakers of the Parliaments of a further nine Member States of the European Union (EU) for a total of fifteen signatories.

The consultation was opened to the Italian public to give them the opportunity to express their views on the European Union, its advantages and disadvantages, the results achieved and the outlook for the future. Very briefly, 77% of participants (about 10,500 people) felt that the Union has brought a series of considerable benefits, including peace and stability in Europe, the free movement of people, greater cultural and educational exchange. Nevertheless, a majority felt that the EU has displayed an inadequate response on a number of very important issues: managing flows of migrants, sustaining economic growth and employment during the global financial crisis and reducing inequality. In addition, many believed that the Union must do more in the fight against crime and international terrorism, and equip itself with a real and visible security and defence policy. The dominant view was that in order to be more effective, the Union must have clearer and more intelligible responsibilities and less complex tools for action that enable effective coordination among the Member States through more transparent and democratic decisions taken when they are truly necessary. It is telling that 68.7% of respondents said that for that to happen, the European Union should evolve into a federal system.

To follow through on the findings of the consultation, the President of the Chamber established a **Committee of independent experts**, with expertise in the wide range of legal, political, economic, social and communication issues associated with the construction of Europe. The members of the Committee are Pier Virgilio Dastoli, president of the European Movement in Italy and rapporteur of the Committee; Tiziana Di Simone and Eva Giovannini, journalists with RAI, the Italian state television and radio broadcaster; Simone Fissolo, president of Gioventù Federalista Europea; Enrico Giovannini, professor of economic statistics at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata"; Enzo Moavero Milanesi, director of the School of Law of

¹ <http://www.lauraboldrini.it/news/sette-domande-per-leuropa-luci-e-ombre-sul-futuro-dellunione/>

LUISS University and chairman of the Committee; and Arianna Montanari, professor of political sociology at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”.

The formation of the Committee was announced by President Boldrini at a press conference held on 21 September 2016 to present the findings of the public consultation. The Committee was given the task of analysing the results of the consultation, assessing the reasoning behind the positions that emerged and developing recommendations for action to respond to the needs expressed by the public and the objectives set out in the Declaration of September 2015. Against this background, the Committee was asked to propose actions that could already be taken on the basis of existing treaties and to indicate what steps could be taken to move forward, at the appropriate time, with the amendment of the treaties and a more general reform of the European Union system in order to revive and strengthen the process of European integration.

President Boldrini asked the Committee to prepare a report by the end of February 2017, especially with a view to defining proposals that the President intends to submit to the Speakers of EU parliaments on the occasion of an interparliamentary conference scheduled for 17 March 2017 at Montecitorio Palace on the eve of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties.

This report is the result of **deliberately selective choices and is structured into four parts.**

The **first part** (“Europe, from yesterday to today”) reviews some of the **main achievements in European integration** over the last sixty years and analyses the current state of the Union, especially in the light of the great economic, social and political transformations under way in Europe and around the world.

The **second part** (“Becoming aware of the common European identity”) is devoted to the **European identity**, which exists but we do not always fully acknowledge. If we do not recognise that identity and fail to reinvigorate it, any future project seems fanciful, especially transitioning towards the goal of federation, which had been proclaimed at the very outset: for this, realistic and practicable proposals must be advanced to make this common identity stronger and more perceptible.

The **third part** (“Offering an immediate response to the demands of Europeans without changing the Treaties”) addresses the **three challenges** – the economy, migration, security – that the public who responded to the consultation indicated as the most urgent issues and for which they would like to see more effective EU initiatives: a number of concrete lines of action are proposed in order to lay the foundations for viable solutions that do not require the amendment of existing treaties.

The **fourth part** (“Launching the reform of the European Union”) summarises **the main drawbacks of the current EU system** and, in declaring an explicit preference for the creation of a federal Community, proposes a working method, a possible path that truly engages public opinion in the Member States and their regions, as well as their respective representative democratic bodies and those of today’s Union.

1. EUROPE, FROM YESTERDAY TO TODAY

The process of European integration took shape and substance with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. On 25 March 1957, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) were born, looking into the future towards gradual common achievements. Over the years, even while implementing only part of the original hopes for European unity, the areas of close cooperation and joint action were expanded. In particular, the Member States, which gradually rose in number from six to twenty-eight, have become increasingly interdependent and have learned to agree shared rules and institutional, administrative and legal structures.

Undoubtedly, there have been periodic crises, but in general the “functional spillover”² approach theorised by Jean Monnet has worked effectively. The idea is that, to move integration forward, it is necessary to overcome the particularism of the different political visions of national governments and give priority to common interests, basing them on proposals drawn up by a European authority (the Commission) independent of the Member States. For this reason, rules and decisions have been adopted in common fora with representation for all the peoples and governments of the Member States, first, of the Community and of the Union.

Thus, with highly pragmatic initiatives and rules, a complex system was built that has produced, for decades and through mutual cooperation, a broad-based increase in collective well-being. A growing number of Europeans have thereby experienced a change in their traditional outlook. A positive sense of the desirability of living, cooperating, working and progressing together has taken root, and many now see their neighbours, regardless of borders, as friends and not potential enemies. Many political forces initially hostile to the European project have also become favourable, as has, above all, the world of the economy and work, which has fully grasped the added value of Europe.

² The functionalist model argues that to overcome national and “sovereignist” resistance it is necessary to gradually develop cooperation among countries in a circumscribed number of functions and segments of normal government activity, gradually increasing their number and the intensity of cooperation, so as to progressively transfer sovereignty from the national level to the supranational dimension.

The economic and social benefits of integration have been, even for Italy, incalculable: just think of the opportunities for small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises to access European markets, the explosion of intra-European tourism, which easily outstrips tourism tied to globalisation. For consumers, the European Union has meant protection against monopolistic practices aimed at the exploitation of dominant positions, improvements in product quality and health. Extraordinary opportunities for mobility for work and study, unthinkable just thirty years ago, have been created for millions of people, and not just the young. We could go on and on in this vein. And let us not forget the longest period of peace in centuries that the countries belonging to the Union have enjoyed or the integration, founded on European values, of the countries of the former Yugoslavia that only twenty-five years ago were locked in a fratricidal conflict.

In the **last fifteen years**, however, the mood of European public opinion has gradually mutated. The European Union has fallen short of expectations in the face of phenomena such as **the globalisation of trade and investment, the technological revolution, the economic crisis, vast migratory flows, wars and conflicts in neighbouring lands, and international terrorism.** The **global economic crisis** and the policies adopted to address it have slowed growth, increased unemployment and devoured savings to the point that some 120 million Europeans are threatened with poverty and social exclusion. Inequality of income and opportunity has increased; social and political tensions have grown. Amplified by the technological and digital revolution, globalisation has disrupted world equilibrium more than anyone thought possible, triggering a rapid international redistribution of work and investment. Atrocious conflicts in the areas neighbouring Europe, with their ancestral roots, have raised fears and prompted terrible terrorist acts, so difficult to prevent that have already altered many habits of those who live in the European Union. Millions of people are abandoning their countries of origin, fleeing oppressive regimes, wars, grave political strains, climate disasters and scant economic prospects, looking for a better future in Europe and elsewhere in the world. In addition to solidarity, these flows of migrants have also engendered fear in the European population, owing to a lack of knowledge. This has opened a moral wound that adds to our current difficulties.

Although the unprecedented scope of these phenomena and their manifestation in rapid succession has changed the world, rendering any balance precarious, the European Union has appeared unable to respond swiftly and adequately, a victim of its gradualism, of the risible financial resources of the EU budget and of the strength of national governments in areas key to the management of transnational issues. Moreover, in recent years, the Union has become an ideal scapegoat for unresolved domestic problems, conflicting self-interests and growing disputes.

As a result, the consensus and the credit granted to the European ideal have given ground to open criticism of the “Brussels bureaucracy” and its supranational ambiguity, almost by definition under the thumb of otherwise unspecified “powers that be”. All this is happening while communication is undergoing a radical metamorphosis, with the rise of social media and the transformation of traditional media, the increasing rancour of public debate and the emergence of phenomena such as “post-truth” argumentation. A consequence is a renewed temptation to find autonomous solutions, which by definition are antithetical to the very idea of open cooperation in Europe: nationalism and localism are re-emerging; the common rules are contested and their violation is legitimised or justified; opposition and conflict are conceived as a working method, instead of dialogue between partners; an enchantment with autarky and the consequent illusions are returning.

In short, the ideals and best practices on which European integration was founded and pursued for decades are now weakened or in the process of dissolution. The causes, linked to **the problems afflicting Europeans** and the Union, can be categorised in three main areas:

- growing **individual and collective insecurity**, mainly due to the lack of jobs and weak growth, which brings out extreme forms of national and local identities, eroding the construction of a European identity;
- the collapse of **mutual trust** between governments and between peoples, reflecting widespread fear for the future, which undermines the sense of the rights and duties upon which any loyal and constructive relationship is based;
- the feeling of people, as voters in democratic systems, that they **count for little or nothing** in fashioning decisions they deem beyond their control, in mortifying contrast with the very core values of the Union.

To describe the situation facing the European Union today, a dragonfly metaphor could come in handy. Initially, a larva lies inside the chrysalis. Instead of being protected, however, the larva is attacked by its cells, which destroy it. The larva dies, but its death gives rise to a new living being, the dragonfly, which will succeed, after a struggle, to break through the chrysalis and take flight. The Union is now going through that very delicate passage that leads to the death of the larva from the blows it has received, especially from within, from its Member States. We must ask ourselves whether it will turn into a chrysalis and dragonfly, or simply die out.

It is up to us Europeans, to culture, to education and, ultimately, to politics, to those who have or want the responsibility of government, to encourage this metamorphosis and really give wings to the process of integration. The European Union is fragile: we can leave it and even dismantle it. The question is whether it is worth it.

The belief that emerges from the consultation at the origin of this report and, in general, from the most frequently expressed positions is that there is a better alternative to the disruptive and individualistic scenarios. But if the EU is to once again be a relevant and recognized actor, it is necessary to overcome the contrast between the living and shared value of European unity and hostility to the meticulous rules, bureaucratic practices, the slow decision-making that drag on daily affairs in the Union in legislation and economic and political institutions. To do this:

- it is necessary to dare to clarify **the essential elements of the European project, the method and the agenda of the Union**, making itself understood by the citizenry, who must be involved and kept constantly informed;
- no variant of the institution-building should be ruled out, including the possibility of a Europe progressing in “concentric circles”, with perhaps the Eurozone as the vanguard of more complete political integration towards a federal Community;
- it must be acknowledged that the perception of the European Union and the feelings that accompany it can improve by virtue both of major initiatives and other apparently minor actions that are still likely to produce positive effects, particularly in terms of public opinion, whose assent and participation in the European project are essential.

The following notes and the concrete proposals in this report are guided by this conviction.

2. BECOMING AWARE OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN IDENTITY

For some time now, the European Union has been scrutinised in an attempt to understand the causes of what initially appeared to be a transient malaise or even a consequence of its development, underscored primarily by the impressive increase of the number of Member States and the extension of its objectives, listed in article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).³

³ Article 3 of the TEU is worth citing in its entirety: “1. The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. 2. The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime. 3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance. It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality

In our view, the current disillusion with Europe was born out, on the one hand, of the mutation of and crisis in the role of public authorities, who are no longer effective in responding to the economic and social needs of citizens and, on the other, of the contradiction between the market, which has an inherent need to expand beyond borders, and democratic institutions still largely based on national electoral systems. That said, one of the decisive causes of the weakening of the European Union, in the face of the epochal developments discussed earlier, is the incompleteness of a fundamental element of any social community: the **European identity**, namely, the individual identity of each national of each Member State is struggling to absorb a full awareness of also being a European citizen, and develop a collective identity among the myriad national, regional or local situations within the common European house. Of course, we are referring to a *European identity* that retains and enhances the conditions of **unity while respecting diversity**, in harmony with multiple membership in entities that while integrated also differ in their histories, cultures, traditions, economic and social structures, daily customs and preferences.

This incompleteness is demonstrated by the lack of a **real European citizenship** in a legal and political sense. In the current arrangements delineated in the Treaties, European citizenship is indeed additional and ancillary to national citizenship. The rights recognized by the Treaties for European citizens are also limited to certain areas, however important they may be. In addition, there are no foundations (for example, in the procedures for the election of the European Parliament) for the creation of a European public space, where the sharing of values, rights and duties is accompanied by a feeling of loyalty to common institutions.

At the origin of the initial commitments and achievements of European integration were the projects and initiatives of visionary **politicians** and **thinkers** fully aware of the consequences of the division of Europe into nation-states and the effects of absolute sovereignty. Consequences that they had suffered along with their compatriots during the first half of the twentieth century and two fratricidal world wars. This is one of the reasons why the

between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced. 4. The Union shall establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro. 5. In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter. 6. The Union shall pursue its objectives by appropriate means commensurate with the competences which are conferred upon it in the Treaties”.

start of the process of European integration enjoyed the consent of the citizenry: while governments assumed responsibility for the process, in the belief that this unprecedented form of collaboration was in the best interests of their respective countries, their peoples have long welcomed and supported its achievements. On this basis, and for decades, a great wealth of shared policies and common rules developed (the *acquis communautaire*), which contributed to economic and social growth and the spread of well-being in all the Member States. Even the inevitable differentiation of results by region was addressed from the beginning of the 1970s with an innovative European regional policy for territorial cohesion.

Despite this heritage, common institutions and national governments have failed to stimulate a profound and irreversible change in the **consciousness of Europeans**, especially in the younger generations far removed from the experiences of the founders. Thus, the “European house” was not shielded from the inevitable setbacks that represent the flip side of the successes. Nor have European political parties contributed to “forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union”, disregarding the principle anchored in the Lisbon Treaty (article 10, paragraph 4 TEU). Accordingly, a real **European civil society** and a **genuine European public opinion** have not formed.

The economic and financial crisis has caused disappointment to dominate, and the European Union is now no longer perceived as the most effective level of protection for citizens, as a community cohering around the same values and the same principles. Rather, the Union is seen as a distant, alien, invasive and inconclusive organism, prey to self-interested forces, which has veered away from the expectations aroused by a never-completed process of integration.

In order to design a process to rebuild trust in the European institutions and to revive the integration process, cleansing it of all those negative elements that are today attracting such criticism, we feel it is essential to recall the elements that constitute the common European identity, too often neglected in the current debate, as often occurs when one underestimates the historical dimension of the present in which we are immersed.

2.1. Choosing Peace

The first of the European Union’s objectives is to promote peace. This is enshrined at the beginning of article 3 of the TEU. It is no coincidence that in October 2012, the EU was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize**,⁴ in an acknowledgement of the Union’s contribution to peace and reconciliation

⁴ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/2010-today/2012/eu-nobel_it

among different peoples. It is thanks to these efforts that a large proportion of the continent was transformed from a theatre of war to a zone of peace. Given our continent's past, this historic achievement is worthy of being defended and upheld on a daily basis. This historical process may be divided into **two main phases**.

During the **first** phase, ancient Greek philosophical roots that influenced all of the West were followed by ancient Roman *pax* and law, which united the forebears of so many of Europe's peoples and shaped their legal mindsets. Next came Christianity, a religion that shares its historical roots with Judaism, spreading amongst Europeans and the many different peoples on our continent the same ethical rules, and acknowledging the sovereigns' civic authority to convert them into laws, alongside institutions from Roman legal tradition. The Latin and Greek languages (the former as *lingua franca*, the latter as *koiné dialektos*) for centuries fostered communication among political and intellectual elites, augmented by cultural borrowings and knowledge from Arab/Berber populations, notably in mathematics, geometry and medicine. For all of these reasons, despite difficulties in communication and never-ending internal wars, mediaeval Europe is remembered as being a rather homogeneous cultural universe.

During the **second of these** phases, religious and political breakdowns, particularly as of the 1500s, and terrible long conflicts wounded this European unity, fostering the emergence of nations with their own languages, credos, ambitions and bitter rivalries. These new state-based units laid claim to the principle of autonomous legitimacy, giving rise to new forms of government and authority in Europe that would battle it out for supremacy during centuries of conflict in every corner of the globe where colonial dominion was at stake. Europe's divided powers alternated between alliance and warfare, as each country jockeyed to assert its primacy over the others.

At that time, with the rare exceptions of a few philosophers and enlightened thinkers, the **idea of European unification** was a goal pursued by men who wished to impose their hegemony or imperialism over others through defeat and territorial conquest. This disastrous centuries-long slide of nation-states culminated in the two wars that took place during the twentieth century. So destructive were they that they became known as "world wars".

And yet those very upheavals and tragedies, dividing and pitting us against one another, in hindsight created a kind of bond because for dozens of generations the peoples of Europe had weathered the same storms. This was true of the Second World War, in which resistance movements fought under a variety of national flags, born of the same spirit and with the same objectives. All this is why the quest for peace is the first hallmark of European identity.

2.2. Our Culture

Looking back over the last few centuries, it is clear that the major **schools of thought**, from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, Liberalism, Marxism and social Christianity, crisscrossed the entire continent, with specific forms and combinations in every nation. The same is true of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity that the French Revolution took from the depths of this consolidated European spirit, anchoring them to the dimension of citizenship; it applies to attempts at emancipation from the yoke of dynasties, and to the independence sought by so many peoples.

Europe's modern political cultures are transnational too: the Liberals share a cosmopolitan outlook, the Socialists an internationalist outlook, and Christian-inspired movements a universalist outlook. As significant as it has been, this underlying, borderless approach was unable to halt the aggravations of 20th-century nationalism or, on a European scale, adopt an America-style Federalist approach.

Even more than the transnational nature of political ideas, **cross-fertilisation and exchange** have long characterized the peoples of Europe in the broadest sense of the term. This is the result of a shared history of experiences, knowledge, beliefs and art in every one of its manifestations, ethics, law and rules, customs and traditions, skills and habits; a differentiated amalgam that characterises all Europeans as members of a constantly-evolving civil society.

In the history of European culture and cultures, the place of honour goes to the printing press – or, more accurately, to the *history and role of the book* – because there has not always been a link between the development of a market and the dissemination of national culture.⁵ Alongside the discovery of national identities built upon the foundations of popular culture, European cross-pollination and exchange took place through the dissemination of fairy tales, which themselves were variations on older texts.⁶ The same is true of the novel, a typically Western genre of narrative prose that set Europe apart from Asia and the Arab world, raising the curtain on a genre that would reap international acclaim.⁷

⁵ For a very long time, an efficient system of book distribution fostered the dissemination of “foreign” cultural products; this was most certainly true of Germany, which imported more works than it exported.

⁶ For example, Charles Perrault and his *Little Red Riding Hood*, Jean de La Fontaine and his rewriting of Latin texts, Boccaccio's literary fables and the *Decameron*, or Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales*; Brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, whose national identity was open to other cultures; Carlo Collodi with *Pinocchio*; and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

⁷ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote*, later epistolary novels like Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, Goethe's *Werther*, Foscolo's *Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, or the travel writings of Goethe, Stendhal, Gautier, Dickens, and Madame de Staël. Marx wrote: “*The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a universal literature.*” Marx's predictions could not come true until the great writers crossed intellectual and

Similarly, European **cross-pollination** became a possibility as a result of a revolution in *communications*, which allowed to record images (photography), motion (cinematography), sound (the gramophone), and then to broadcast sound (radio) and images over the airwaves. Europe led the United States in these fields up until the end of the 1800s (in film, until the outbreak of the First World War). As well as written culture, *opera* played an eminent role in this European process of cross-pollination, based as it was on transnational collaboration between librettists and musicians;⁸ the same was true of the *theatre*, particularly *Commedia dell'Arte* which monopolized European stages for two or three centuries.

Last but not least, the spadework for preparing a **common European cultural background** also took place in the *sciences*, the importance of which goes beyond mere names (including many women like Marie Curie, after whom a major European programme is named, and Rita Levi Montalcini). This is abundantly clear from the large number of Nobel prizes awarded to Europeans, often to groups of researchers working together.⁹

2.3. Our Legal Safeguards

Anybody who lives in Europe today, in whatever nation, as a result of that nation's history and its collective contribution has a chance to benefit from and share in rules and laws that offer a priceless foundation of peaceful cohabitation and orderly economic and social interaction. However, we often take these things for granted, forgetting that they were the result of enormous efforts at institutional level (in the past at national level, today at European level), and a consequence of the commitment and struggles of those who came before us.

Looking at the current picture, we may see:

- The **political and economic** achievements of the “*Schuman Declaration*” in the last sixty-seven years of progressive integration – at different speeds in different times, yet always coherent with its original goals, never the result of improvisation, indeed, a slow and meticulous search for common solutions;
- The great importance of **education systems**, from primary and secondary schools to university, in which education in citizenship goes hand-in-hand with developing an awareness of what it is to be European historically, geographically, through art and literature;

national borders to reach a general and international public (authors such as Melville, Hugo, Dumas, Verne, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to name but a few).

⁸ Consider Monteverdi, Mozart, Gluck, Pergolesi, Händel and Haydn, followed by the Europe-wide success of Rossini and Verdi.

⁹ Notwithstanding growth in the number of winners of American origin, the European continent remains on top of the table of Nobel prizewinners.

- **Principles and values:** human dignity, freedom and democracy; non-discrimination and equality, in particular between the sexes; the rule of law and respect of human rights; pluralism, tolerance, justice and solidarity. Ethical and juridical principles enshrined in the EU Treaty and the *Charter of Fundamental Rights*, and guaranteed through “**judicial federalism**”: cooperation between European and national judges, called upon to apply and ensure compliance with the Union’s laws, has made it possible to consolidate a common body of principles and rights “common to Member States’ constitutional traditions”;
- A common set of feelings within the national dimensions of the EU and the Council of Europe with regard to the **protection of rights**, in which the added value of the European Union lies in the fact that it places **political and civil rights** on the same level as **economic and social rights**, ensuring that all of these rights are fully protected, also before the courts at European and Member State level, building upon a legal heritage that represents a condition for belonging to the EU and a constitutionally-enshrined obligation for Member States;
- The rights and responsibilities incorporated into European Union law (regulations and directives) and absorbed into domestic legal systems: the right to work and the prerogatives of a social state; European citizenship and its rights; the freedom to travel, to settle in a State other than the one of origin, to circulate one’s products, to provide services and make investments across borders; the transparency of EU institutional acts and documents; information; participation in legislative and consultative processes; the protection of personal data; protecting the consumer, free and fair competition, food safety, and product safety; defending the environment and sustainable development; guaranteeing efficient services in the general interest, alongside equal opportunities; promoting study and ongoing learning; justice, and access to EU financial resources, given that the EU budget belongs to all European citizens, not just to its institutions.

3. OFFERING AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE DEMANDS OF EUROPEANS WITHOUT CHANGING THE TREATIES

Despite all of these positive opportunities and achievements, in recent years there has been a rapid fall in public opinion concerning the project of European integration. Hope has given way to fear; a feeling of inclusion is being overwhelmed by the threat of exclusion. The EU’s institutions and Member State governments have a historical and political responsibility to act rapidly, to demonstrate that the alternative of greater integration is better than scenarios of fragmentation or break-up.

In recent years, experts in economic, social, political and institutional issues, and indeed Europe’s own institutions, have generated a significant raft of

proposals to improve the form and mechanisms of how the European Union is governed, along with its sectoral public policies. It goes without saying that it is beyond the scope of this report to offer a summary of all such proposals.

It is, rather, our intention to focus on just a few aspects associated with these issues, as suggested by respondents to the consultation, which we consider to be of particular relevance to the European Union's future. We focus above all on issues that may be implemented without modifying the wording of current Treaties.

3.1. Strengthening the European Identity and a Sense of Belonging

We believe that it is essential to strengthen a sense of *European identity*, of belonging to a common European home, if we are successfully to resume the path towards integration. This may be achieved by fully leveraging the skills, tools, initiatives and policies that already exist in the Treaties currently in force.

Any construction of a collective identity is based on putting into effect the same processes: a system of shared values, guided by models of conduct identified within a historic framework of reference;¹⁰ distinguishing features that allow for the immediate **identification of a population, such as the flag, the anthem**, and even the **currency – the euro**; and **collective rituals, ceremonies and celebrations** that reference historical events to which the entire community ascribes symbolic value.

Since the European Community was established, **9 May has been celebrated as “Europe Day”**, commemorating the proposal put forward by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950: Europe's first example of close economic integration, pooling its coal and steel resources, as the initial step towards a future *federation* (without fear or hesitation, it was already far-sightedly called a federation). This development was seen as indispensable to maintaining peace on the continent. And yet “Europe Day” is barely known. It does not (yet) represent a collective event, certainly not one that is comparable in terms of popularity and importance to Member States' national days.

¹⁰ Research in six European nations (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, the United Kingdom and Spain) into Europe's most illustrious figures past and present offers a number of interesting findings. The most popular response was Leonardo da Vinci, followed by Christopher Columbus and Martin Luther; these three garnered around two thirds of all preferences. These results are particularly significant in that they come from a specific historical period: Renaissance Europe, an extraordinary time of change, and of the emergence of the very values that laid the foundations of the Western system: freedom of religion, the discovery of new worlds, scientific innovation, artistic greatness, and also the beginning of capitalist development. Notably, many present-day European programmes, including some of the most ground-breaking – of which *Erasmus* is the best known – are named after the most illustrious figures in European culture. A further example of how Europe is interwoven was made tangible through the Council of Europe's cultural “routes” programme, which includes the *Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Route*, the *Via Francigena*, the *Charlemagne Route*, the *Baroque Route* and the *Art Nouveau Route*.

And yet other contemporary events are slowly beginning to gain ground across Europe: *European White Nights*, held for the first time in Berlin in 2011 before being run in Paris, and then Rome, Madrid, Riga, Brussels, and Bucharest; *European Museum Nights*, promoted by the Council of Europe; and the *European Researchers' Night*, conceived by the European Commission back in 2005. These events forge links among Europeans through ever-increasing cultural tourism, uniting Europe by leveraging its history, culture, arts and sciences; the extraordinary roots of an illustrious past spanning thousands of years, including major revolutions and amazing developments.

This incredible and unique heritage is the peculiar essence of *European identity*. The European Union has striven to pay homage to this heritage and history through the *images it uses on the euro*: on its notes, based on the theme of European architecture, particularly *bridges* which symbolize connections between States and peoples, not to mention a physical structure of progress and the ability to overcome obstacles; and on its coins, for which the Mint gave each State one side to fully express its numismatic imagination, while the other side is the same for everyone, providing a visual reference to the ideal of *unity in diversity*, which is the EU's motto.

Alongside these achievements that deserve to be given greater visibility, a "*Decalogue for European identity*" has been drawn up, which we present below:

1. In a decision similar to the one adopted by the European Council of Milan in June 1985 for "*Europe Day*" and the twelve-star *European flag*, Member State governments can agree to celebrate **9 May** as a holiday everywhere.
2. Ministers of Sport could ask European competitive sports federations to systematically **carry the European flag and play the anthem in sports competitions** involving European teams, waving the European flag alongside national flags at the head of delegations of EU State athletes at the Olympics and Paralympics, as urged by the European Parliament.¹¹
3. The European Voluntary Service could be structured as a veritable *European Civil Service*, absorbing domestic civil services, with the added requirement of being able to/having to do the service in a country other than one's country of origin, thereby extending the opportunities of this learning experience to young people and anybody else who wants to take part, along the lines of the "*European Solidarity Corps*".

¹¹ EP Resolution dated 2 February 2017 on "*an integrated approach to sports policy*".

4. An effective network of *European Institutes of Culture* should be established under the auspices of *European public diplomacy*, as a meeting place for intellectuals, artists, scientists, academics, teachers and indeed anybody who wants to raise the profile of European culture around the globe as a whole and in its different national, regional and local guises. These Institutes could work together with national Institutes and Academies abroad, boosting their impact through synergies and partnerships – something that is already being pursued in part through EUNIC, the Association of EU Member State cultural institutes. Moreover, they would be able to act within the framework of specific cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe.
5. Ministries of Education could adopt a pilot project to draft **coordinated common texts in history and geography with a European outlook** rather than merely focused on the national, for schools at all levels. Equally, **elements of EU law** could be introduced as a compulsory subject at all European university faculties, and as a foundation of **European civic education** in schools. Moreover, language teaching could be strengthened from nursery age, starting with one language other than mother tongue, followed by the teaching of two languages throughout the school years.
6. The *Erasmus Plus* programme (for school pupils, apprentices, university students, young people, school graduates, school principals, teachers, youth workers, university lecturers, people who work in business, vocational training experts and adults on a learning pathway) should be strengthened and endowed with at least ten times the financial resources in the 2020-2024 planning round, to ensure that it becomes a real and special right for Europeans, as urged by the European Parliament.¹²
7. Under the framework of implementing the so-called Digital Agenda, drawing inspiration from the Declaration of Internet rights made on 28 July 2015 and approved by the Chamber of Deputies' Committee for Internet-related Rights and Duties,¹³ the European Union should adopt a **“European Charter of Digital World Rights and Duties”** to ensure online access as a fundamental individual right and precondition for personal and social development, and to guarantee the creation, use and dissemination of online knowledge as a common good accessible to all.

¹² EP Resolution dated 2 February 2017 on implementing Regulations to establish “Erasmus+”.

¹³ http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/commissione_internet/dichiarazione_dei_diritti_internet_pubblicata.pdf

8. The univocal focus on referring to the national must be supplanted by systematically making the most of the identity of the Union's **regions** and **macro-regions**.
9. It is necessary to promote the harmonization of conditions for accessing national citizenship in the European Union's various Member States, and the civil and political rights associated with such citizenship. Beyond this, assessment should be carried out of the circumstances necessary in the future to establish the status of a veritable **European citizenship**, independent from national citizenship, based on the principle of "multiple identities". Within this framework, the idea of an effective right to vote and to stand as a candidate in legislative elections for European citizens in the country where a person resides could be proposed once more as an alternative to the rights enjoyed in one's country of origin.
10. The European Union must adopt a directive to fully implement articles in the Treaty that enshrine the **principle of non-discrimination**, while strengthening the political, legislative, and judicial instruments necessary to ensure compliance with the fundamental rights and the **Rule of Law**, giving the EU Court of Justice jurisdiction if requested over specific appeals concerning fundamental rights, in order to determine whether or not a Member State has undertaken a grave and persistent breach of EU values.

3.2 Communicating Europe and shaping a common identity.

Anyone working in marketing or communications knows very well that no product (goods or services) can be publicised if it does not exist or is not immediately and easily identifiable. Unfortunately, most communications on the EU today are publicising products before they actually exist. For example, when the European Commission says that it has adopted a proposal for a directive it takes at least three years before that directive can be transposed into the national legal system of the Member States and thereby produce any effects on the lives of people and business.

Moreover, the effects of a directive, or more generally a policy decided at the Union level, considered to be beneficial to one particular country, are usually announced by that government and national politicians as their own personal success story. The exact opposite case arises when the European Union adopts a position that does not tally with the stance being advocated by the government or the national politician concerned, when they tend to make it plain that "it is all Europe's fault" or "Europe has imposed it on us". In both instances, the result is detrimental to the European Union, which emerges with tarnished prestige, and blameworthy.

This dynamic is aggravated by the protracted time taken by the EU's decision-making and legislative processes, even though they are shorter, on average, than in the individual Member States. One such example is the permanent abolition of roaming charges promised over six years ago, and which will come into force in June 2017; this delay is likely to have a negative impact on consumers because of the long time taken between its announcement and its implementation, and the fact that its potential advantages might be counteracted by a general increase in telephone charges in the meantime. This same fate applies to the Structural Funds: the EU announces billions to be spent, which are earmarked by the Union and allocated to the Member States, but even though the information on how the money is spent is available,¹⁴ the benefits are not publicised. More generally, European citizens' rights are not well known and are often not even being honoured by the national, regional and local authorities themselves. But the EU is always scapegoated for it.

It is very easy to tweet an attack on Europe's convoluted policies, but less easy to explain them in 140 characters. The European Union is a great target for facile post-truth campaigns. With its complex decision-making system, the provision of information by the EU and on the EU has always been highly complex. Without going into the whole question of access to sources, it must be emphasised that the press, television and radio have often considered news about the European institutions to be too boring, and not newsworthy enough, until they discover precisely in times of crisis that many of today's opening news stories have to do with the outcomes of European policies. In the Internet and Twitter age, an anti-EU tweet or headline on the Web can reach a vast audience, whereas only a well-trained and specialised press can provide serious, in-depth and comprehensible information on EU issues, and must constantly check facts to be able to tell the general public what the Union really is, what it can and cannot do, and the part played by the Member States in creating the present inefficiencies in the decision-making process.

Here are a number of proposals which will enable the EU institutions and the Member States to communicate more effectively and play a part in raising public awareness of the positive role of the Union in their daily lives and in the formation of a common European identity:

1. To launch a **#BastaBufale** and **#BastaFalsi (Stopfakenews)** campaign on the policies, decisions, laws and regulations and the institutions of the EU, drawing inspiration from the recently proposed appeal, also launched in Italy, to combat the general disinformation creating confusion, a practice which is pernicious for the European Union – a basically little-known and understood entity – and hampers a fair debate in European public opinion.

¹⁴ For example, see www.opencoessione.gov.it

2. To facilitate the development of a **European public opinion** through information and media which are responsive to “European” news. One highly symbolic practice could be to organise a **joint press conference of the heads of the European institutions and the Member States** to publicly announce their conclusions after every European Council and the EU Councils, leaving the individual press conferences of individual Member States until later. This would give journalists, and hence public opinion, a truly European view of what has been debated and decided jointly by all the governments acting together, narrowing the room available for unilateral accounts seen from a national perspective.
3. To make **the positive impact of the European Union on the daily lives of every European citizen visible and comprehensible**. For example, if a regional training course is being financed from the EU Structural Funds, at least the people attending it should be informed of that fact, which must therefore be clearly explained.
4. More generally, to guarantee **visibility to the added-value of every financial contribution from the EU budget** on the websites of every national, regional and local government agency tasked with the indirect management of European funds.
5. To clearly indicate **how much each citizen spends on the European Union** and the return on their contribution. The debate about the net contributors to the EU budget and those who feel that they are being taxed by the Union is very topical. It would clarify the situation to publicly display the financial contribution of the citizens of a given Member State to the EU budget, and make the costs, payments, and returns transparent.
7. To set up **“European houses”** (in the capitals and the most important cities) to give the EU a human dimension and bring it closer to the individual citizen. These “houses”– almost like a one-stop shop – can group together all the EU contact points and services: for example, *Europ-direct*, contacts with the MEP elected in a given constituency, and the regional offices with competence for the European Union Structural Funds. In the “houses”, the citizens could meet competent people, request information and find answers to their questions: on the paper-work needed to take part in the Erasmus programme, or on how to obtain refunds for treatment abroad, or how to take part in the European Voluntary Service (or some future Civilian Service) or the *“Your first EURES Job”* programme

3.3 Guaranteeing prosperity and reducing inequalities

According to surveys conducted in recent years, the **Single European Market**, which has brought huge benefits in terms of income and

employment in every European Union country, still has considerable untapped growth potential. Likewise, the possibilities provided by the convergence and competitiveness policies, which have produced growth but have not managed to eliminate imbalances and inequalities between states, between regions and between social classes, have not been fully exploited. Examples of unfinished policies include the work still in progress on the single digital market, the Banking Union, the single capital market, the Energy Union and a full-fledged services market, respecting unity in diversity. The fact remains that many countries still have barriers to the entry of foreign competitors, reducing opportunities for expansion and growth by the most efficient and innovative economic operators.

One element bearing down on the functioning of the European market is also due to the configuration of EU policies and actions which were designed without being compliant with the “**horizontal social clause**” (article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - TFEU), requiring the institutions to take account of needs relating to a whole range of factors: promoting a high level of employment, guaranteeing adequate social protection, combating social exclusion, ensuring an appropriate level of education and training, and safeguarding human health. It is here that the difference between the supranational model of the ECSC and the EEC model becomes crystal clear: for whereas the ECSC adopted appropriate instruments and policies to deal with the social repercussions of supranational policies in both industrial sectors, the EEC was designed to be wholly focused on creating a barrier-free market.

The introduction of the **single currency, the Euro, has guaranteed savings to businesses and private citizens** by reducing bank charges on commercial and tourism transactions, eliminating the exchange rate risk, and lowering the cost of borrowing (suffice it to think of the high interest rates charged on mortgages and loans in Italy prior to joining the Euro zone). Moreover, the Euro has made closer **integration between national economic systems** possible, which is crucial in an increasingly globalised and competitive world. Yet the monetary union system set up under the Maastricht Treaty and designed to manage minor shocks in quantitative terms has demonstrated all its shortcomings and limitations when confronted by wide-ranging crises. The asymmetrical way the Eurozone countries have reacted to the economic crisis over the past ten years, the often excessively mechanical application of rules designed to encourage adjustments in individual economies to deal with external shocks, the public finance constraints applied similarly to both current expenditure and capital expenditure, the EU's tardy modification of its **economic governance** to tackle financial crises, the absence of adequately broad “safety nets” able to cushion their impact on the real economy and on the weaker sections of society – these are all examples of just how much more still remains to be

done to achieve real integration so as to deliver the promised and hoped-for benefits of Monetary Union.

This problem, together with what is now an anachronistic separation between **macroeconomic policies (subject to European Union competence) and social policies (subject to the Member States competence)**, has prevented the EU from attaining the objectives of creating a single “socially just” borderless European area. Symbolically, the four freedoms of movement (goods, services, capital and people) within a single borderless area have remained fragmented, and in the application of the Treaty, the free movement of goods has taken precedence over the free movement of people. Thus, the absence of any social offsetting systems and the rigid constraints introduced by the Fiscal Compact have contributed to the waning public support for the European project, particularly in the countries which have been mostly affected by the crisis.

It is evident that the consolidation of the **Economic and Monetary Union** (EMU) must move forward at the same pace as the completion of the Single Internal Market by removing any remaining obstacles. This means that all the governments must honour the legal undertakings and the deadlines to which they have freely signed up, and which can enable the EU to be the driving force behind **sustainable development**. As article 3 TEU provides, “The Union shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on **balanced economic growth** and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment”.

In the light of the foregoing, and leaving aside the conceptual issues regarding the optimal features of economic and social policies, we may conclude that the solidity of the Union system is seriously threatened unless effective and quantitatively substantial action is taken and made easily recognisable by the general public. Moreover, abandoning any form of fiscal discipline would also jeopardise the financial sustainability of the Member States, and hence the wellbeing of the people. Besides, **mutual mistrust** between “virtuous countries” and “imbalanced countries” (so defined in terms of a judgement based on purely financial variables) is making it extremely difficult to find a political agreement for taking decisions that can radically innovate the practice followed in recent years. Despite that, a raft of decisions should be adopted as soon as possible, to relaunch a growth process that makes the reasons for being together evident to all, which overcomes diffidence in the EU institutions and improves the living conditions of the poor, those at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and in particular the unemployed, children, and the younger generations.

To enable the European Union to achieve the fundamental goal of sustainable development we have to reflect on the functioning of the **Fiscal Compact** (also looking ahead to its likely incorporation into the Treaties), in the light of

a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the social benefits and costs to which it has given rise.

We are proposing the following:

1. We should rigorously apply the “**horizontal social clause**” to protect workers’ rights (including the right to mobility), particularly within the framework of competition policy and the market liberalisation measures. This clause should make it possible to define minimum conditions in the social area (along the lines of the “*Youth Guarantee*”), obliging countries to implement the most appropriate measures to achieve the hoped-for results, and thereby attain the so-called “*social Triple-A*” announced by Commission President Juncker, the substance of which should be agreed upon as soon as possible.
2. We must supersede the dogmatic distinction between economic policies and social policies and define a “*Social Compact for 21st century Europe*” to preserve and strengthen the social market economy and to stimulate sustainable development (from every point of view, economic, social, environmental and institutional) which will enable States and the EU as a whole to attain the *Sustainable Development Goals* signed in September 2015 at the United Nations by all the European countries.
3. To begin trialling a **European unemployment benefits scheme**, previously broached in the Four President’s Report,¹⁵ which the beneficiaries will recognise as a direct EU benefit. Many analyses have been conducted on how such a mechanism could operate without passing-on the costs to the fiscally more “virtuous” Eurozone countries. We are convinced that the introduction of such a mechanism would send out a powerful signal to the most sceptical sections of the European population about the benefits of European integration.
4. Comprehensive **lifelong education programmes for adults** (for example, encouraging and harmonising the work of people’s universities) and **youth training schemes** are needed to prepare young people for a real European labour market, flanked by the complete portability of social insurance contributions. High quality continuing education and training is crucial to address the radical changes taking place in whole production sectors, revolutionised by digitisation, the transition to *industry 4.0*, the circular economy, and the decarbonisation of socio-economic activities.
5. The *Juncker Plan* should be expanded to include **long term “social investments”**, especially in human capital in order to strengthen the resilience of individuals and the whole of European society against future shocks such

¹⁵ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/workarea/download.aspx?id=17720>

as those brought about by technological innovation and the automation of production.

6. The European instruments launched in 2013 to **combat youth unemployment** must be enhanced, paying particular attention to encouraging youth entrepreneurship.

7. In the framework of providing assistance to the poorest and social exclusion-prone sections of society, we should make provision for the possibility of guaranteeing a **minimum inclusion income** to be conditional on objective elements as well as active behaviour on the part of the beneficiaries. After an explicit decision is adopted at the Union level, this income can be financed both from the EU budget (appropriately increased to enhance its capacity), and from government budgets, but at all times managed under the responsibility of the European institutions.

8. Common policies should be drawn up for the **transition towards renewable energy sources** and the rehabilitation and upgrading of urban centres and production facilities, in order to reach the decarbonisation target by no later than 2050. Consequently, the extension of the “*Juncker Plan*” (as recently proposed by the European Commission) must be steered in this direction together with the cohesion policy with its structural funds; similarly, the tax system can be radically reformed to encourage *the circular economy* and responsible consumption. These measures can prove to be of great practical help to fuel a wide-ranging and vigorous “*green new deal*” which, among other things, will be able to reabsorb the people made jobless as a result of the crisis in certain industries, such as construction.

9. The **EU budget** must be strengthened, also for the purpose of financing some of the aforementioned measures, particularly on the revenue side, using the Union’s *own resources*. It is essential to ensure that the **overall tax burden remains absolutely unchanged** but more fairly distributed. For measures of this kind, the first things to be considered are the pathways set out in the Report by the High Level Group on the EU’s Own Resources chaired by Mario Monti¹⁶, with a focus on targeted increases of consumption taxes (particularly on high energy-intensive goods) and on reducing personal income tax.

10. The idea of transforming the **European Stability Mechanism** (established in 2012) into a fully-fledged **Eurozone budgetary instrument** with its own autonomous borrowing capacity to be able to meet symmetrical

¹⁶http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/hlgor/library/reports-communication/hlgor-executive-summary-recommendations_en.pdf

shocks (which affect the whole Eurozone) and asymmetric shocks (which only affect some of the Member States).

11. **National tax systems should be more closely coordinated** in order to reduce tax competition which has the effect of concentrating the tax burden on less mobile factors of production, primarily labour. In this case, it is proposed that the European Union should embark on and continue to support **a robust initiative to deal with multinational corporations** to prevent opportunistic conduct designed to elude national tax regimes and pay fewer taxes on income earned within the territory of the EU. Regardless of possible illegality, such conduct gives rise to a sense of injustice which fuels an often irrational rejection of globalisation and European integration among broad sections of the population in addition to creating unjustified and unjustifiable incomes discrepancies between employees, executives and shareholders.

Decisions regarding the strengthening of the EU budget referred to above are highly innovative in political terms, even more than as fiscal techniques; they are feasible under the existing Treaties but obviously difficult to adopt in the current state of tension and disagreement between the European governments. However, they must be thoroughly debated and appropriate decisions taken in consequence, for it should not be forgotten that one of the main *raison d'être* of the European Union (and in particular the Monetary Union) has to do with exploiting economies of scale and best practices developed within the Union in order to enhance its operational effectiveness and efficiency.

If the Union is to move forward more rapidly and within the current EU budgetary framework, it is proposed to make more and better use of a few common instruments, such as project bonds provided under the Compact for Growth and Jobs of June 2012 and already trialled. These are instruments that can direct the huge mass of international capital (including forms of venture capital), constantly seeking profitable opportunities, towards tangible and intangible infrastructure programmes with positive fallout on stable job creation.

3.4 Managing migration flows and respecting asylum rights

The European Union has regulated its asylum and immigration policies in the Lisbon Treaty, based on the values of respect for the dignity of the person, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and respect for human rights. However, faced with a massive influx of migrants (widely predicted for a long time) and asylum-seekers in recent years, it has demonstrated considerable unpreparedness to deal with the matter. Rising numbers of refugees from

areas devastated by war and fleeing famine and environmental disasters have created serious domestic problems in the Member States, causing divisions among the people and also bringing out atavistic fears, resulting in forms of rejection.

Many people feel that foreign populations with different values, cultures and customs to ours are a threat to our European identity and our security; barriers have therefore been raised against them, and everything is being done to stop the influx. Where government policies are more welcoming, it is often the local people, who consider themselves to be the poorest and most vulnerable, who object to the presence of migrants, in the name of defending their own jobs and the right of Europeans to take precedence when it comes to social services entitlement. This has bolstered a substantial growth in political-ideological and anti-European nationalist movements, which are usually – and very simplistically – defined as “populist”.

Divergences within European society and conflicting feelings among the European people are increasing and risk becoming explosive and threatening democratic life itself. The first victim, of course, is the European Union: incapable of finding fair solutions all round, it is seen as part of the problem. The second victim is the spirit of loyal cooperation between its Member States, which are being increasingly split apart in a way that could prove fatal.

To prevent this situation from pushing Europe dangerously off-course, we need a genuinely European policy able to guarantee the fair management of the complex phenomenon of migration and to gradually phase-in appropriate ways to receive migrants and refugees while protecting their rights, and fostering their human development and inclusion; a policy able to provide for and adequately assist the economic development of the migrants’ home countries and help attenuate and eliminate conflict; a policy that identifies Europe’s real capacity to absorb and integrate the migrants within the EU, and which measures up to the task of taking concrete steps to deal with the many different challenges raised by properly integrating them and ensuring their inclusion, which is indispensable. Lastly, a policy also capable of explaining to the people in Europe the real opportunities they can bring by coming here.

There are various models we can refer to as benchmarks: considering migrants as a resource for internal, depopulated and economically run-down areas, where they can become a vehicle of development, identifying “circular migration” policies for economic migrants by facilitating the arrival of workers and, subsequently, their return to their homelands with the possibility of maintaining cultural and financial relations with their host countries.

In this varied, sensitive and fraught field, the following proposals have been made which can be implemented within the framework of the existing Treaties:

1. The European Union has to equip itself with a **more incisive and visible foreign policy** to be able to act, particularly in the Mediterranean, through extraordinary measures if appropriate, in the war zones and crisis-stricken areas from which the refugees are fleeing. The differing political systems must therefore be considered, and a distinction drawn between aid to local governments and aid to non-governmental organisations, particularly voluntary services, so that the aid can get through to those who really need it.
2. **Border control, asylum and immigration policies** must be authentically European and common to all the EU Member States, based on the principles of **equity and solidarity** and systematically applied, and not be limited solely to the refugee reception phase. These policies, moreover, must be drawn up, decided and implemented upon a proposal of the European Commission and adopted by the Council with a qualified majority and by the European Parliament.
3. The future *European Asylum Agency* (today's European Asylum Support Office - EASO) must be vested with powers to coordinate the national authorities when processing asylum applications and to manage **European relocation programmes** throughout the territory of the EU for people qualifying for international protection, reflecting on the possibility of broadening the coordination to include economic migrants.
4. **Resettlement programmes** must be mandatory on all the Member States and **integration and inclusion** – and, where appropriate, repatriation – measures have to be introduced.
5. In this connection, **the provisions of the Dublin Regulation** must be overhauled consistently with the principles of solidarity and the fair sharing of responsibilities, in particular in order to supersede the first-country principle.
6. The **role of the European Court of Justice** must be enhanced with respect to the protection of EU's fundamental rights.
7. The remit of EU delegations in non-EU countries must be broadened in order to coordinate the diplomatic and consular missions, particularly in the area of development cooperation, immigration and asylum.
8. The *ius soli* **principle** should be subjected to an impact assessment, to appraise the eventuality of adopting it as a common provision of EU law.
9. The possibility of **enhancing EU policy for development cooperation and food aid** must be analysed, and the ordinary legislative procedure used for the adoption of urgent measures in the event of any unanticipated influxes of migrants.

3.5. Improving security and investing in defence

In 2015, EU Member States allocated a total of \$270 billion (1.6% of GDP) to military spending and **external security**, which is less than half of what the

USA spent on the same (\$600 billion, 4.4% of GDP). The pledges given at NATO meetings to raise spending to 2% of GDP would entail an increase of around \$70 billion for EU Member States. The cost, however, could be kept down and considerable political benefits obtained if, instead of simply adding up the totals of their 28 (or 27) different national defence forces, European countries were to make full use of economies of scale that a true European common defence policy would enable. Implementing a common defence policy would also bring about the realisation of the permanent and structured system of cooperation envisaged in articles 42 and 46 of the TEU.

Changes in the European approach are slow in coming, but some signs of a policy shift are now visible, also because the new direction announced by the new President of the USA has compelled the Europeans to face the fact that they may now have to move away from “dependence” on the United States to mutual “interdependence”, and assert European autonomy in the fields of satellites and other new technologies.

Even so, to avoid repeating the fate of the **European Defence Agency**, which is **effectively in a state of paralysis** after 12 years of intergovernmental vetoes, a stronger guiding hand is needed, along with an enhanced capacity to forge consensus, which is still lacking among European governments. Similarly, it is difficult to envision an efficient European military sector without a proper European industrial policy or efficient cooperation among EU Member States in arms manufacturing and sales, an area lacking any serious European level of control.

The proposals for this sector are as follows:

1. For the time being, there is no chance of a united European army substituting the various armed forces of Member States. More realistically, we need to think in terms of **European military structures** that can coexist with current national armed forces. A structure of this sort might take the shape of a “**European General Staff**” in charge of military forces of sufficient strength to fulfil peacekeeping and peace-building operations decided by the EU or by the United Nations.
2. The European Union also needs to make use of the instrument of *permanent structured cooperation* through which it could jointly plan and develop its military capacities, including its capacity of response to electronic attacks. It could also delegate the management of specific crises to a group of Member States with a view to integrating the Eurocorps Treaty – which Italy has yet to ratify – into the European Union Treaties.
3. Consideration should be given to the creation of a **European military academy** to train officers for a European defence system that would operate according to common strategic dictates.

4. It is absolutely essential to **standardise weaponry**, which would reduce costs, increase the efficiency of European military structures, and kick-start a Europe-wide industrial policy for the defence sector.

European fears mostly concern **internal security**, threatened by international terrorism deriving from ancient hatreds and Islamic fundamentalism. The importance of internal security has been made all too clear in recent months by the attacks in France, Belgium and Germany, and, before that, in Spain and the United Kingdom, most of which were carried out by European citizens and residents. Once again, the European Union's ability to act has proved seriously defective and alarmingly limited. Much of this has to do with **the inadequacy of the current European Union Treaties**. Yet even using them as a basis, much more can be done to improve cooperation in the area of justice and between police forces and intelligence services.

The events of recent years, from the Mafia killings in Duisburg in 2007 to the terrorism of today, have shown that the *European Public Prosecutor's Office* (set up under article 86 of the TFEU) needs to do more than just protect the financial interests of the European Union. It must also have the power to **enforce criminal law effectively** in defence of our fundamental freedoms and security. To fulfil this task, the European Public Prosecutor's Office must be given powers of initiative, as well as scope for greater coordination and procedural efficiency. It needs to be able to respond to the pressing contemporary problems of **terrorism and organised crime**.

To this end, the Union has already drawn up an EU terrorist list, instituted a **European arrest warrant** and set up the post of *European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator*, while the European Court of Justice has jurisdiction for any disputes relating to the terrorist list. The efficiency of EU counterterrorism initiatives still leaves considerable room for improvement, and it is both necessary and urgent for the European Public Prosecutor's Office to broaden its brief to include serious cross-border crime perpetrated by organised criminals and international terrorists. Indeed, Europe now finds itself in a similar situation to that which led the United States in the Prohibition era to set up the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and federal prosecutors to investigate and prosecute crimes beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of local police forces.

For these reasons, we propose:

1. The establishment of an independent **European Public Prosecutor's Office** with broad-ranging powers to operate under the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union. The Treaty of Lisbon already contains provisions that would enable the creation of a Public Prosecutor's Office through the mechanism of *enhanced cooperation*. We

propose that the European Public Prosecutor's Office should dispatch a deputy prosecutor to each Member State with specific powers to investigate various forms of cross-border criminal activities, such as crimes against the financial interests of the European Union, organised crime and international terrorism.

2. The creation of an “*EU Intelligence Agency*” and a strengthening of the roles of *Europol* and *Eurojust*, which should be placed under the democratic oversight of the European Parliament.

4. LAUNCHING THE REFORM OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

As may be seen from the proposals put forward so far, much can be done without necessitating any changes to current Treaties. Yet we believe that **a root and branch reform of the European Union system is unavoidable.**

A linguistic analysis of the Treaty of European Union reveals some telling information about vocabulary choice. By looking at a list of the top 100 most frequently used words, we can obtain some insight into the underlying themes and concerns.

Apart from obvious terms such as “European” and “Member”, **the top four words** are, in descending order of use: “Union”, “Council”, “States” and “Security”. The word “Union” appears 226 times, “Council” 189 times, “States” 105 times and “Security” 80 times.

In the light of the political and legal implications of these four terms, their high frequency in the Treaty text suggests that the Treaty itself is framed from a notably intergovernmental perspective. The word-cloud conveys the idea of a “**union of States**” governed more by the Council (or the European Council) than by other institutions, a union that should concern itself with security – both its own and that of its citizens – far more than it currently does.

So, in spite of the high profile of economic integration and joint fiscal actions, a linguistic analysis of the source text reveals that the Treaty on European Union is not nearly so concerned with this aspect of integration. It also reveals that the Treaty regulates a system that is essentially intergovernmental, in which **States rather than citizens are the principal subjects.** Meanwhile, the most commonly held view now seems to be that the States are unable to come up with any cogent solutions to our current problems, and that the citizens have lost faith in the institutions and actions of the European Union.

GOVERNO ESERCITA FONDAMENTALI
 CAPO COMPETENZE INTERNAZIONALE
 DELIBERANDO INTERNAZIONALI
 APPROVAZIONE DIRITTO CONFORMEMENTE POLITICHE BILANCIO
 CITTADINI LIBERTÀ
 COOPERAZIONE AFFARI COMUNE SUOI QUESTIONE AMBITO
 ASSICURA OBIETTIVI EUROPEA POLITICA REPUBBLICA
 VALORI SE EUROPEO QUALIFICATA
 CONFORMITÀ TRATTATO MAGGIORANZA MANDATO
 CARTA
 AZIONI SVILUPPO SICUREZZA MEMBRI TRATTATI MISSIONI
 PROPOSTA PARLAMENTO LORO APPLICAZIONE
 FINE DECISIONE ALTO ADOTTA
 INTERESSI NAZIONALE
 RAPPRESENTANTI ESTERI DECISIONI ESTERNA
 PROCEDURE DIFESA AZIONE FUNZIONI
 CAPACITÀ
 PAESI COMMISSIONE PRINCIPI STATO UNANIMITÀ ACCORDO
 ATTI FUNZIONAMENTO STATI MEMBRO NAZIONALI LIVELLO
 GIUSTIZIA ESTERA
 POSIZIONE DELIBERA RAPPRESENTANTE SETTORE PROCEDURA
 PARLAMENTI RISPETTO POSSONO DIRITTI TUTTI MILITARI
 VOTO MISSIONE PRESIDENTE MODALITÀ CORTE
 PROTOCOLLO ISTITUZIONI SETTORI NORME
 PRINCIPIO QUADRO
 SOLIDARIETÀ

Various incongruities are now apparent in the European system, and in its mechanisms and liturgies. Many of them stem from the original project for Europe, which has never been truly superseded in spite of the numerous treaty changes, and their presence engenders doubt about the democratic legitimacy of the European Union in the minds of its citizens. Other incongruities have become all too evident in recent years as a result of a devastating sequence of financial, economic, social and political shocks.

Faced with these emergencies and determined to deal with the situation and resolve the crisis, the **European Council** has taken on ever more decision-making powers, even beyond those assigned to it under the Treaties, and yet has still been unable to come up with the sort of response the current challenges demand. We are left with an unsatisfactory European Union in which the distribution of powers not only departs from what the texts of the Treaties indicate, but is also inadequate.

Some examples:

- a process of **progressive de-parliamentarisation** is taking place, which only reinforces the impression among voters and the public that they have no say in decision-making, and that the European Parliament has little relevance;
- in the European Parliament itself, the political **weight of national delegations** (or some of them) has steadily increased, as has the influence of national and local interests, as may be seen from the acquiescent stance that the Parliament took with respect to the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 of the EU budget;
- the perception of the political and democratic legitimacy of the European Commission has not improved. The “*Spitzenkandidaten*” **approach**¹⁷ to selecting the President of the Commission has done nothing to establish a more appropriate relationship between the Commission and the European Parliament;
- the Commission has allowed its **powers of initiative** to fade, and has conspicuously reduced the number of key legislative proposals that it puts forward. Worse, over the last three years it has displayed timidity even in performing its function as a **guardian of European Union law**, as may be seen both from the steep decline in the number of proceedings taken against States for the violation of European Union

¹⁷ The method by which European political groups choose and put forward the name of their preferred candidate for the presidency of the Commission when presenting their lists before the election of a new European Parliament.

laws, and from the sharp criticisms made of its double role as both political body and guarantor of rules;

- the **substantial failure of the European Citizens' Initiative** (ECI) casts doubt on the advisability of limiting the power of legislative initiative to the Commission alone, and raises the question of how to get citizens and their representatives involved from the outset in decision-making processes;
- increasingly often, the Council is becoming a place where **the concerns of the more powerful nations prevail over those of the weaker ones**, which is contrary to the community spirit solemnly proclaimed by the Treaties, and contrary also to the very intent and purpose of the Council itself, which is to evolve into a full-fledged "Chamber of States" of the European Union;
- the **European Central Bank** has undertaken several initiatives, but its scope of action continues to be constrained by the particular interpretation of several States of European economic and monetary union, and thus by limitations that European citizens and the financial markets do not always understand or agree with;
- the **European Court of Justice**, although it remains rigorous in the enforcement of European legislation, seems to have lost its forward-looking innovative drive that used to make its case-law an indispensable, distinct and valiant source of law.

4.1 Towards a transparent and participative reform

A reform of the Treaties in the near future is unlikely for two main reasons. In the first place, changes to economic and social policies along the lines indicated above would need to improve the quality of life of European citizens, especially of those who live in countries where anti-European sentiment is on the rise. Secondly, any such reform would require extensive preparatory work, which entails entering into a continuous, genuine and open-ended dialogue with EU citizens, associations representing civil society and European political forces. This is why we do not subscribe to the idea of keeping the representatives of European institutions and representatives of civil society separate from one another at the events organised in Rome to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of 1957.

The usual approach, which prioritises agreements between governments, no longer seems fit for purpose for the present time, still less for the future. Nor does the holding of a *Convention* in place of a genuine European debate answer current needs. We believe that it is no longer enough simply to map out a project of reform of the EU system, a task that can be done with the

assistance of suitable groups of experts from various fields. Rather, we strongly believe that **full transparency and participation** are the only way forward.

To define the future of the European Union, a **broad-ranging debate** involving citizens, popular movements and political parties is needed to prompt action by the governments of Member States, national parliaments, regional legislative assemblies and, through dialogue between parliamentary delegations, the European Parliament. We need to have a free-ranging discourse that does not shy away from engaging in debate with Eurosceptics and other critics of the European project, of whom there are now many. The **free flow of information** absolutely needs to be improved, both as regards the method of dissemination and as regards its level of detail. For example, universities might make an ideal setting for debate, as they are able to offer opportunities for a structured form of discourse open to citizens and civil society.

Later on in the process, work will need to begin on the drafting of a new Treaty that gives **pride of place to the European Parliament** and envisions a system of constant dialogue with national parliaments. This work must be done in conditions of maximum transparency and public disclosure, and will be followed by the decision-making and ratification phases, in accordance with the constitutional arrangements of each Member State. Finally, at the end of the process, the public will have to voice its opinion by means of a *referendum* to be held in every Member State on the same day. In any case, referendums are already a legal requirement in many countries, and politically indispensable in others. The referendum would ask citizens to express their opinion on the new federal arrangements, on its constituent and founding rules, and on the idea of moving beyond the boundaries of today's nation states into a new European dimension.

The referendums would represent a completely new approach to consulting the public. If the preparatory stage succeeds in galvanising a sufficient sense of involvement, then the body of voters invited to express its opinion will be more consciously "European", thanks also to the preliminary discussions and efforts to create a European identity as put forward by this document.

4.2 Towards a European Federation

No European State should be under the illusion that it can manage on its own in dealing with the **great global challenges** of the day: the internationalisation of trade and/or possible global economic and financial crises; inequality and poverty; climate change and environmental deterioration; energy policy; the dynamics of financial markets; taxation and tax elusion; the rising flow of migration and asylum and integration policies; and the

combating of terrorist and international crime. No European country that relies on the limited resources and policies of a single nation can compete successfully against the giants of the global economy.

The explicitly declared goal of the next round of reform must be the creation of a *European Federation* that is not a “superstate”, but rather a **federal Community**. It is difficult and probably impossible to reach this goal by dint of amendments to the current Treaties, and a **new Treaty** is therefore required. The new Treaty must assign appropriate and exclusive powers to the new European entity so that it may operate in every field that exceeds the competence of individual States, and it must set down the basis for a constitutional system that allows the powers to be exercised effectively and democratically.

An outline of the possible **institutional architecture** of a future European Federation usually includes the following basic elements:

- a federal level of government endowed with all the **necessary exclusive powers** over those sectors where the actions of individual States alone are insufficient;
- a **European Parliament with full legislative powers** (including the power to initiate legislation if the Commission is unable to do so) to be exercised jointly with the “Chamber of States”, which should evolve from the current European Council;
- a **European Commission performing the functions of an actual European government**, and bound by its democratic and fiduciary obligations to the European Parliament;
- a **European Council** whose function is to serve as an elevated deliberative chamber in which strategic guidelines are discussed and resolved, and debates are held every six months on major political issues;
- appropriate forms of **involvement of national parliaments** and the legislative assemblies of the regions of the various federated States;
- a **federal budget** of a size proportionate to the common goals, funded by European taxes.

These constitutional changes will need to be accompanied by the introduction of **European federal citizenship**, as distinct and separate from national citizenship and encompassing **a core set of independent rights, including social rights**. They should include the right to a minimum inclusion income, and a basic level of social welfare, which will need to be included in and funded by the federal budget.

A debate is needed on the question of the “*multispeed Europe*” to arrive at a clear understanding of what this ambiguous and generic term means: whether it refers to an *à la carte* Europe in which each Member State is free to join whatever best suits it, an approach that is liable to accelerate the breakup of Europe; or whether it refers to a *Europe of concentric circles*, based on increasingly close cooperation among a limited number of States with the possibility of others joining later. The *Eurozone* could serve as a forerunner of this second solution, starting off in the economic and social sphere and then extending itself gradually into other spheres, including security and defence.

It goes without saying, however, that genuinely federal European policies are impossible without adequate financial means to back them up. Those who decry the weak response of the European Union to the global economic crisis, and compare it unfavourably to that of the USA, should remember that the EU has a budget of less than 1% of its GDP, whereas the US federal budget is 25% of its GDP. Europe therefore needs a **budget that is federal in scope and funded through EU taxes, which must strictly replace the corresponding national taxes**. With a view to federalism, the EU budget should focus on the allocation of resources to guarantee common goods of a European scope, as recently suggested in the *Report of the EU high-level group on own resources*.

In the light of the foregoing, we make the following proposals:

1. Establish a **common forum of debate** at a European level that brings together, on the one hand, all the parliaments, regional legislative assemblies of European Union Member States and the European Parliament¹⁸, and, on the other, European citizens in order to:
 - define the elements of a **uniform electoral procedure** for European elections¹⁹, to be adopted by the European Parliament, providing for mandatory **transnational electoral lists** whenever the relative parties form part of the same political group in the European Parliament. We suggest that the 73 seats in the European Parliament currently occupied by the United Kingdom and soon to

¹⁸ If we wanted to make a quick start on this, then after the series of critical general elections coming up in 2017 in the Netherlands, France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Italy, the debate could be made to coincide with the seventieth anniversary of the European Congress of The Hague, which took place on 7-10 May 1948. Attended by important European leaders of the day, it was here that the idea of the Council of Europe was conceived.

¹⁹ Ideally, the elections should be those of May 2019 – see the preceding footnote.

become vacant should be assigned to transnational lists, as the Italian and Belgian governments have proposed;

- recognise the **essentially constituent role of the European Parliament**. In dialogue with national parliaments and regional legislative assemblies, the European Parliament should debate and work on a detailed project for a comprehensive reform of the current Treaties. The reforms should then be open to **public discussion and debate by civil society**, before the subsequent signing and **ratification by Member States**.
 - consult the public **through a referendum** to be **held on the same day** in all Member States. This would be a constructive referendum offering the electorate the option to vote for their State to enter into a new federal European entity. In this respect, the referendum would differ from national referendums, in that it would be proposing entrance into a new system rather than exit from an existing one.
2. The future **European Federation must be comprehensible** to its citizens, and its structures should be configured to achieve this goal in an appropriate and democratic manner.

Within the European Union, **all forms of opting out must be prohibited**, and the right of exit also needs to be reconsidered. At the same time, the new structure should allow for the **possible differentiated enforcement of European law**, and should therefore leave room for transitional measures to accommodate Member States that may be experiencing difficulties of enforcement.

“GREATER EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: THE WAY FORWARD”

ROME, 14 SEPTEMBER 2015

DECLARATION

We, the Presidents of the Camera dei Deputati of Italy, of the Assemblée nationale of France, of the Bundestag of Germany, and of the Chambre des Députés of Luxembourg, which currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Presidency of the EU Speakers Conference, **are convinced that new impetus must be given to European integration.**

As the Presidents of national assemblies, whose members represent the people's will expressed through democratic elections, we pledge to contribute to this process and underscore the indispensable role of parliaments.

We believe that more, not less, Europe is needed to respond to the challenges we face, both internally and externally.

The European Union and its development have undoubtedly been a success story. Its original objectives as a project for peace and widespread prosperity across the whole of Europe are no less relevant today than they were when the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957. In addition, the Union, an economic area of global importance, in which democracy, fundamental freedoms, rights and security are guaranteed, has exercised - and still exercises - great political influence globally.

The European Union is, however, also currently confronted by extraordinary challenges: the greatest refugee and migration crisis since World War II, the threat of irreversible climate change, insufficient growth and high unemployment rates, increasing inequality relating to poverty and material deprivation in many Member States, financial and economic crises, international crime and terrorism, as well as a perceived inability to address citizens' concerns and needs. The latter contributes to rising voter apathy, intolerance towards migrants and other minorities, and resentment against national and European institutions, all of which undermine social cohesion.

Despite the important reforms implemented over the last five years, these problems have also highlighted weaknesses in the construction and functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union, as well as the need to forge ahead with European political integration. Courage and pragmatism will be needed to move towards a sharing of sovereignty at the European level.

No European country can effectively represent its interests in a globalised world and meet challenges in Europe and beyond by acting alone. Our common goal is a stronger and more integrated European Union, as stated in the Treaty on European Union.

Our citizens need a stronger Europe, a project based on respect for fundamental rights and human dignity and on the principles of the rule of law, the social market economy, economic and social cohesion, solidarity between Member States and sustainable growth. Our priority in the immediate future must be responding to our citizens' needs by developing effective policies at the national and EU level to stimulate growth, competitiveness and employment, particularly of the youth, while combating social exclusion and discrimination, and promoting social justice and protection.

Our partners want a stronger Europe to face the great instability surrounding our continent - our neighbourhood is in turmoil, both to the South and to the East. It is clear that when Europe does act, like it did in brokering the historic deal with Iran, it can play a major role. In a globalised world, Europe can be a key player if it speaks with one voice and acts as one.

We believe that greater political integration is needed

Greater European political integration - in line with the principle of subsidiarity - is needed to overcome the inherent weaknesses at the heart of the European Union and of the Economic and Monetary Union, and to provide Europe with the vision it needs to avoid stumbling from one emergency to the other. These weaknesses have been highlighted by the handling of the economic and financial crisis – including the case of Greece - and by the fact that there is a real risk of there being a 'lost generation' in some Member States despite the recovery.

The current moment offers an opportunity to move forward with European political integration, which could lead to a federal union of States.

Greater integration will also allow our continent to successfully face global challenges such as forced displacement and increasing migration flows, climate change, the spread of conflicts and terrorism, instability on the monetary and financial markets, competition from emerging economies and the need to diversify and coordinate energy sources.

The on-going integration process should not be limited to the field of economic and fiscal matters, or to the internal market and to agricultural policy. It should include all matters pertaining to the European ideal - social and cultural affairs as well as foreign, security and defence policy.

To better respond to citizens' concerns, the people's representatives in national parliaments must also explain how the European institutions work to their citizens more clearly, as well as what the medium- and long-term prospects for the Union are.

We believe that the strengthening of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), as well as of its social dimension, are needed

We believe that we must complete the EMU by forging a veritable financial and fiscal union, but that we must also strengthen the institutions overseeing it and work towards ensuring genuine democratic accountability and legitimacy, thereby creating the stability and prosperity which the citizens of the Eurozone look for. More ambition is needed in order to achieve a genuine and fully functioning EMU, including by further strengthening and mainstreaming the social dimension in the governance framework.

We therefore welcome – as a basis for future discussion - the joint initiative by the Presidents of the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, the Eurogroup and the European Central Bank for reform of the EMU.

In this context, the transfer of greater powers to the EU institutions should be sought. This will require a greater role for national parliaments in EU decision-making.

We believe that greater adherence to the founding fathers' vision is needed

As envisaged by the founding fathers of the European Union, it is essential that the countries of the signatories of this Declaration, together with all the driving forces behind the process of European integration, remain aware of their special historical responsibility.

Our countries, which have the same obligations and rights as all other EU Member states, are duty-bound, because of their decades-long experience in the construction of the European project, to inject new impetus into the integration process.

Since all national Parliaments of EU Member States have a part to play and do play a prominent role, we think that subsequent events could be held to present this joint Declaration and to launch a discussion on concrete proposals on strengthening the Union, including at the next Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments in Luxembourg in May 2016. This Declaration is open for signature on the part of the Presidents of all the parliamentary assemblies of the EU Member States, and will be presented to the European Union institutions.

POSTSCRIPT: DID YOU KNOW...

The European Union is part and parcel of our everyday world. It has been integral to our daily lives for decades, though we often ignore it. Maybe it is just forgetfulness, or maybe we have failed to appreciate the true dimensions and concrete importance of Europe. Against a background noise of endless bickering over zero-point something economic figures and the financial crisis, Europe has increasingly come to resemble little more than a combination of institutional complexity, political summits, misallocated funding and excessive constraints. But there is another friendlier Europe, the Europe that has made real and meaningful achievements, the Europe that has changed so many aspects of our lives for the better and brought us closer together. Below we offer a miscellaneous list of this more comprehensible, concrete and friendly Europe. These few examples are a bit random, but they all refer to some tangible aspects of Europe, and they serve to remind us that even if its fundamental structures and ways of working need to be reformed, the European Union is not something to be thrown away:

- *Because of the euro and the European health insurance card we carry around with us. Thanks to the euro, we do not have to change money and pay commissions when travelling. The health card gives us the right to hospital care in whatever country of the Union we find ourselves in.*
- *Because we do not want to pay excessively high interest rates on house and car loans as we did in the 1990s. Thanks to the action of the ECB, we can buy a car on a loan charging almost zero interest.*
- *Because we have the safest and most meticulously inspected food in the world. It may require some patience to read the labels, but thanks to transparency laws we know where the food we eat comes from, whether we buy it from a supermarket or a local market stall.*
- *Because when it comes to tracing the provenance of foods, the European Union's powers of investigation are second to none. If something goes awry, there is a rapid warning system set up across the European Union enabling the exchange of information and immediately halting the distribution of the product at risk. Nowadays, the labelling is even attentive to our allergies.*
- *Because we have toys with the CE mark to guarantee the highest safety standards in the world for our children: from packaging to the chemicals used in manufacture.*
- *Because if we buy a defective product, we can demand a replacement, and we enjoy the right to a two-year warranty. If we buy online, we can return the product within two weeks, and an out-of-court arbitration system exists to hear disputes between consumers and businesses.*

- *Because if we travel by plane or boat, we are entitled to be reimbursed for delays and cancellations.*
- *Because Europe will even fund our ideas. For example, "Creative Europe" provides financial support to filmmakers, musicians, actors or writers who want to expand their audience, just as the "Life" programme supports environmental projects.*
- *Because if we are in a country without our national embassy, we can seek help from the embassy of any other EU Member State.*
- *Because from June 2017, we will be able to make calls, send texts and use data on our phones without any additional costs from any Member State.*
- *Because we have a single emergency number throughout the Union: 112.*
- *Because we still have young people keen to participate in the Erasmus programme, which has been running for thirty years. Through Erasmus, four million students have done part of their studies in another EU country, and have thus acquired new language skills, broadened their cultural horizons and expanded their career opportunities.*
- *Because we can use 'Eures', the European portal for job mobility, to look for work.*
- *Because, in the end, the work done by these "Eurocrats" costs each European citizen €1.40 a month, which is no more than the cost of a kilo of apples or a carton of milk.*
- *Because, in allowing us to build all this and so much more, the European Community and its successor the European Union have assured us of peace for SIXTY YEARS.*