

EJ Resolution 2017, Lubjan

Protecting democracy is our obligation

1. What about stability in our democracy?

This question has been raised in Europe more and more often. For all of us, for our future the preservation of democracy in all EU member states has got a fundamental significance. The EJ members are actively fighting for this aim where- soever it appears necessary. In the important 2017 elections antidemocratic and anti-European tendencies could successfully be pushed back, but there is still some danger as recently shown in the results of the German federal election. Our community will only function if the citizens have regained more trust in the political concepts of the EU and if they consequently realize their advantages.

2. In some member states the EU central values are particularly threatened. In the past we have simply sat back and watched to what extent some countries like Germany or France ignored EU rules without even being punished. Nowadays alarming setbacks must be registered in Hungary, in Poland and also in Romania. In those countries the courts are being paralyzed, free press is muzzled, university professors are silenced, NGOs are discriminated as foreign secret agencies and Brussels' decisions are quite simply ignored. That must be seen as an assault on our basic democratic values, which obviously we, as journalists, have to move far more into focus of the media. The respect for the supremacy of the law must be restored, since it is the basis of our European Union.

3. If Europe is meant to play its role as anchor of stability in the world, it must remain trustworthy. Any kind of impression that we apply double standards must be absolutely avoided. The European Union can only advocate the values of democracy, of human rights, of the rules of law, of solidarity and of subsidiarity, if she has the authority that these values gaining full acceptance of all member states. Those values are a kind of compass for us as European Journalists, those values are the backbone of our profession.

4. The European Union urgently needs a future strategy for the countries of former Yugoslavia. There is a danger that the Western Balkan region is drifting away. More and more these Balkan republics get into the field of tension between the East and the West. Russia, in particular, is using that political vacuum as a means of destabilizing. The unsettled conflicts provoked by the disintegrating wars in the 90ies still have sufficient potential to foster nationalism and ethnic hatred.

5. European politics has meanwhile become an essential element of domestic policy for each single member. Whether in foreign policy, in security policy, in questions of climate protection, in migration policy, in consolidating the home market, in reducing national debts or in creating a bank union: without a common European cooperation, no country would be capable of making an efficient and sustainable policy. On the other hand, however, it becomes more and more difficult to solve the urging problems.

6. We have to realize: the more the European Union is enlarging the more it is losing creative power, because the differences in interests are often too varying, even if there are numerous suggestions how to reactivate the European Union. One way may be the idea of a Europe of different speeds. We must make better use of the chances in the Lisbon treaty. The strategy of a differentiated integration might perhaps overcome the standstill at present in a lot of political fields. Every member-state should preserve the right to join all forms of integration if it wishes and if it is ready. In this way national interests could also be taken into account.

7. The European Union is definitely much more than a domestic market, an open trade and commerce system or just the Euro currency. It is our common values, which are at stake. In such a union of values it is of paramount importance to reflect our common European history and to draw the necessary conclusions. The EU is responsible for keeping peace safeguarding freedom for future generations to come. As Association of European Journalists we stand for the preservation and promotion of the European values and the basic laws as laid down in all member states: there are no strong values without to practice the values.

8. The existence of a pluralistic public is of a vital significance for each democratic society, which must ensure open debates and exchange of opinions. In the European Union, the development of public opinion is progressing far too slowly. Whatever happens is a kind of Europeanization of various national public opinions whereby each time the national point of view seems to be predominant in reporting. On the other hand the internet favours a transnational European public. Doing so, the internet does not respect the rules of mass media such as truthfulness, completeness, and our system of values. The internet challenges the functional media instead. Journalistic duty of care and of diligence, political classification, background research, analysis i.e. qualities professional journalism stands for, are often neglected by the internet. The European Journalists thereby firmly point out the dangers of a kind of communication, which is mainly based on the internet. There are numerous examples which prove that the so called „social media“ drift into the offside because of their „asocial content“ . Even if citizen participation is necessary, we must not leave the assessment of the complex European issues to agitators and populists in the internet. As European Journalists we strictly demand: we need the culture and diversity of the professional media, otherwise Europe would be definitely destabilized.

(agreed by EJ-General assembly, October 14, 2017)