

EJ-Resolution 2016: Our world requires a solid Europe

1. Concerns about the situation in Europe, already declared in our 2015 resolution, have meanwhile noticeably increased. In particular the GB Brexit vote stands for a decisive break in the European integration process. To what extent that break will have consequences remains to be seen; it depends also on the way how the other 27 member states will draw their conclusions and react, whether or not they are ready for a stocktaking of the competences and responsibilities and whether they are willing to avoid the splitting of the European Union. As European Journalists and critical observers we state that more and more citizens are doubting the European process. This skepticism is shared in almost all member states. There is an answer to that: EU citizens need to feel that the European Union contributes to the quality of their life. This also means: more common foreign policy and less bureaucratic patronizing from Brussels.
2. As European Journalists we are deeply concerned in realizing that the global democratic process has almost come to a standstill. In our eastern neighbourhood Russia and Belarus are two negative examples. At the very moment Turkey is extremely fast turning into a dictatorship. In other countries such as China the political development is reactionary, too. We must absolutely avoid that there is an alliance turning against Europe, an alliance which is contradictory to our values, to our democratic states and to our concept of a peaceful cooperation among nations and peoples. Therefore Europe must take a far more active position in defending our democratic values.
3. Freedom of speech is a constituent element of our liberal democratic system in Europe: without the unhindered exchanging of arguments and opinions there is no democratic expression possible. Free states must guarantee free speech as long as fundamental individual rights are not impaired. As European Journalists we warn against the fashionable mania of „political correctness“, which may prevent people from discussing themes and topics which do not comply with the main stream. Disappointment with politics and a decreasing voter turnout rely on the fact that many EU citizens consider their problems not sufficiently being dealt with. Here media have partly to be blamed since in choosing their themes and topics they should far more take sustainability into consideration. If they do not do that there will even be more disenchantment and public frustration.
4. The European Journalists are also deeply worried about the general decline in human rights, in the freedom of speech and in free opinion in general. In the Middle East we are both shocked and terrified with a crisis we have never experienced before, if we see mass murdering and brutality mostly committed for so called religious reasons. This situation is also deteriorating in many other regions of our globe, for example in Africa. Therefore the European Union has to find ways and means how religious freedom can be encouraged and protected even outside our European boundaries. We must anticipate inter-religious conflicts and tensions and try to overcome those problems by preventive means. If we do so we should not forget that the majority of the persecuted people are Christians.
5. Europe is a community of peoples advocating the same values and interests. As European Journalists we strongly believe that our European culture, spirituality and civilization are integral parts of our community. Our living together in freedom and liberty is increasingly threatened by Islamic terrorism; our citizens are really terrified. This terrorism has got intrinsic and extrinsic roots as documented in thousands of IS fighters who often are of European descent. In this situation we need an open debate asking ourselves whether and to what extent Islam is a part of Europe. As to this issue clear-cut positions

are urgently required. Fundamental rights such as the freedom of opinion, of art and of the press are constituent elements of our democratic system. Those rights cannot be negotiated at all. The freedom of religion must be respected as far as this freedom is harmonizing with other democratic principles and basic rules ..

6. Europe is a popular place for refugees. For most refugees coming to us Europe is a guarantee for freedom, welfare and stability. We all have consented in globalizing the world market, world production, international financing and data communication, yet globalization is reaching its limits as far as the migration waves are concerned. It shouldn't be Brussels' to decide the distribution of refugees. The fact that the European Council has decided by qualified majority a mechanism for a practical and realistic distribution is more than questionable in terms of a democratic procedure. Such a decision has no grounded reference in the Lisbon Treaty and shows a lack of respect for fundamental rights of European Member States. Even emergency situation should avoid to jeopardize basic democratic bases. Of course, the European Union must be enabled to protect the outside borders far more efficiently.
7. In Europe it is noticeable that the journalists and the media have more and more come under pressure. In a lot of states and regions the freedom of the press is in jeopardy. The prestigious and independent association „reporters sans frontières“ prove that into many European countries journalists need to perform their activity under political or economic pressure or being conditioned. The survey of the 171 countries (worldwide) ranking list demonstrates us the negative development in the EU:
1.Finland, 2.Netherlands, 4.Danmark (-1), 8.Sweden (-3), 9.Ireland, 11.Austria (-4), 12.Slovakia, 13.Belgium, 14.Estonia (-4), 15.Luxembourg, 16.Germany (-4), 21.Czech Republic (-8), 23.Portugal, 24.Latvia, 27.Cyprus (-3), 34.Spain (-1), 35.Lithuania (-4), 38.Great Britain (-4), 40.Slovenia (-5), 45.France (-7), 46.Malta, 47.Poland (-29!!), 49.Romania, 63.Croatia (-5), 67.Hungary (-2), 77.Italy (-4), 89.Greece, 113.Bulgaria (-7).

In 17 EU-countries the situation has grown worse, some positions are more than shameful. If the freedom of the press really is a constituent element of our democracy we must do everything so that the European member states figure at the top of a ranking list on freedom of the media. This mark of quality must also apply to European candidate states when their membership is being negotiated.

8. The 2016 international situation is characterized by economic and political instability, by Islamic terrorism, by gigantic migration waves, by the new rivalry between China, Russia and the USA. In addition to that there are increasing egoism and growing nationalism in many European countries and worldwide. As European Journalists we warn against the whole complexity of the situation which may even lead to a hazard of peace. In order to reduce the problems the world needs a strong European Union which develops solid common solutions, finds compromises and exerts a calming influence on disputes. Unfortunately reality is much different: the European Union is far too busy in itself. The European Union does not export stability, on the contrary, it imports instability. We ask all the EU-members be more responsible in performing solidarity and convergence towards the European Institutions that they have created. The European Journalists call for a policy on changing that deplorable state of affairs with might and main.

(agreed by the EJ GA in Trento, September,19,2016)