

## **Europe's Values for the Future**

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**Abstract:** The EU has been misunderstood as a purely economic community for a long time. It should not be forgotten that the EU is a community of values in the first place even if the EU's economy plays an important role for the whole World. The crisis has a firm grip on Europe. Every day there are more and more comments of those who have already predicted the downfall of the EU. The value of our common currency and even more the importance of our shared values of Europe appear to be in free fall. The Treaty on European Union (as amended by the Lisbon Treaty) mentioned these values in Article 2. These values are common to all Member States with a society, which is characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men. "Europe has become a role model. The universal appeal of our values is reflected in the countries of our southern and eastern neighbors. Unlike in the past, these values are not mediated by subjugation and colonization, but by voluntary acceptance when we share them. This applies to our community. This also applies to our relationship with our neighbors and the world. The purpose of this paper is to describe the most fundamental European values as well as their significance for our society. It shows why these values are the basis for our modern and democratic societies today. The paper points out how these values are going to be like in the future, during the deepest crisis of the EU.

**Keywords:** European values; economy; democracy; community

*Nothing is possible without men, nothing  
lasting without institutions (Jean Monnet)*

### **1. Introduction**

The larger European Union becomes, the most important it is for the citizens who live in it to realize that their union has been built on common values.

A political European union that wants "to speak" with one voice on important issues would have to understand that the EU is more than just a convenience but a community of values. A European Union that wants to be a political union would have to answer the question that necessarily arises from the self-description as a

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community of values: What are the values the EU? Are they European or universal values?

The core of the European Union is a community of values. The members rely on the dignity of man, human rights, democracy, freedom, peace, law and solidarity. From these so important values grows also the responsibility for foreign policy.

In the Treaty of European Union is mentioned that the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well being of its peoples. This makes it clear that European integration is not an end in itself but fundamental objectives is to determine the life of EU citizens.

The Lisbon Treaty has also made the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union a part of its primary law. In the Charta the fundamental rights and freedoms are accurately described and defined. In the consciousness of Europe spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible and universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity. It is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship and an area of freedom, security and justice.

## **2. The Term “European Values”**

In many discussions about the European community is mentioned that the EU is a community based on values. This shows that the EU is not an economic platform. In fact, in the early 1950s, the EU has not been established to promote economic progress (then known as the European Coal and Steel Community, ECSC), but in order to secure the most important value of all: peace. Five years after the devastation of World War began negotiations that led to the agreement on this first European Community in 1951.

For the founders of the ECSC it was always clear that this merger should take place on a democratic basis. In 1957, the parties took the liberty of association to specifically target when extended the mono-sectorial integration in the coal and steel sector to the whole economy by the Rome Treaties and the European Economic Community (EEC) was established. Moreover the Maastricht Treaty, which in 1992 officially founded the European Union, the EU Treaty then spelled out the principles of the Union in Article 6: “The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States”. This points out that the values on the European Community are put on the human aspects and not the economic ones.

In 2000, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights was proclaimed, which is now part of the Lisbon Treaty by the so-called primary law, so directly applicable

law in the European Union. Although the Charter binds only the European institutions, it makes clear to which core values, the European Union committed. It begins with the same sentence as the most Constitutions in the EU member states: "Human dignity is inviolable."

The term "European values" raises various problems. One of it is that it affects Europe and its borders. The question of the limits of Europe can be positivist or political answered. The positivist answer is the geographical, the Europe between the Atlantic and the Urals. The policy answer focuses on the political culture, the most important sum of the written and unwritten laws that have influence on the political decision-making. Geographical Europe has hardly a common political culture. If, however, we speak with views of the European agreement of a common political culture, we mean the political culture of the West. The conceptual distinction between "Europe" and "the West" is important. The Viennese historian Gerald Stourzh noted that Europe is not (only) the West. The West goes beyond Europe. But Europe also extends beyond the West.

Europe's diversity is one of the guiding principles that distinguish the European development from the United States. On the other hand, the pressure to reflect a common basis increases in interest in Europe in general and in the European Union in particular, which includes also beliefs. A community wins identity also by definition of values and goods. A community is held together by common beliefs and therefore it has also a cultural dimension. In culture definitions it can be found values dimension. On the basis of shared values, the "good of the membership" will be distributed.

### **3. European Values!?**

The question of what values are important for the European Union is joined by the second question: In the hierarchy, these values relate to each other? It's not as if the values unconnected and untouched each other exist. In many discussions plays a major role the question of how freedom and equality are to relate to one another. Equality refers only to the same opportunities from which anyone can do what he wants (and he can)?

Human dignity is the first European value considered in the Charta of fundamental rights of the European Union. This means the right to live, the right to respect one person for his integrity. It also includes the prohibition of torture or inhuman treatment and the prohibition of trafficking in human beings and compulsory labor.

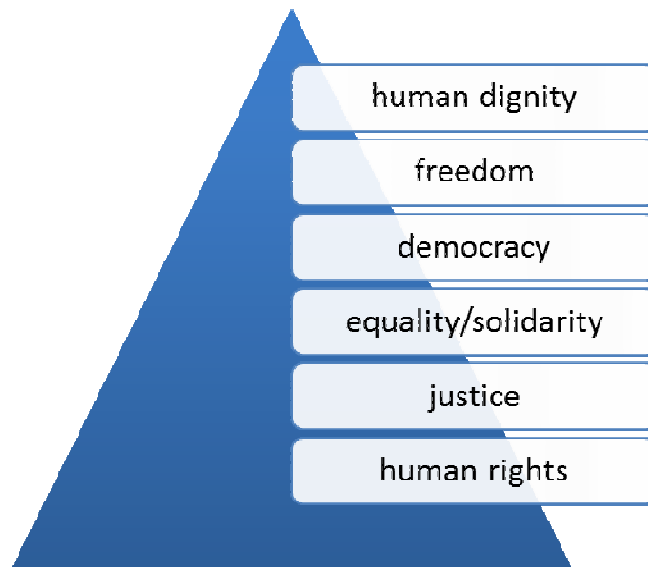
Under the second chapter of the Charta we find freedom as a fundamental right of the EU. Here is mentioned the right to liberty and security of person, the right to marry and to found a family, the freedom of opinion and information, the freedom of everyone to form and join associations, the freedom to freely engage in work

and also the academic freedom. Also the right to education is noted, with the possibility to receive free compulsory education.

Further, Equality is considered as a fundamental right, first of all the equality before the law and then the non-discrimination, the right of a child, the respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and the respect for the life of the elderly and of persons with disabilities.

Solidarity is mentioned also as a fundamental right. We have here the right of workers for consultation and information, the right to negotiate, the right of fair working conditions, the right to benefit from medical treatment, the social security and assistance and also the access to service of general economic interest.

The citizens' rights are guaranteed by the Charta: the right to vote and candidate at elections to the European Parliament and at municipal elections, the right to good administration, to petition, and the right to refer to the Ombudsman of the Union, the freedom of movement and of diplomatic protection.



**Figure 1. The European Values**

An important value is the rule of law. The EU is supporting this not only in the Member States; it is itself a legal community. Since there is no “EU Police”, which could interfere with law infringements by Member States, the European Union is dependent on the Member States to adhere to the agreed rules and their eventual interpretation by the European Court of Justice. Would not that be the case, the EU would have no future because they could not enforce their laws and regulations.

#### **4. Critics**

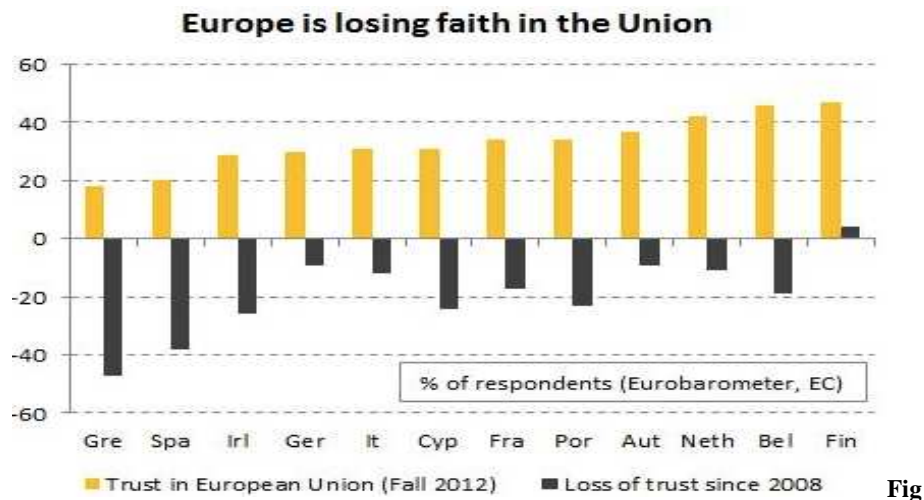
The post-war Europe was thought to be a project of peace, democracy, freedom and shared cultural traditions. In the past centuries the European continent was often a place for cruel and bloody wars and massacres of countless dead. It was the need for chance to transform Europe in a “common home” for the next generations. The “European social model” was designed to be an alternative to the model of unrestrained capitalism. During the Great Economic Crisis of the thirties this model was then thought to tackle the escalating unemployment, hunger and mass poverty.

Charles de Gaulle called for an economic system in which the “treasures of the nation” can no longer be exploited for the benefit and profit of a few. In Germany, Ludwig Erhard made from the expressive “prosperity for all” one of its goal that was meant to overcome the “old conservative social structure” that divided the society into a few super-rich and a wide lower class. Extensive opportunities, regardless of their origin, and social hedging in illness and age were the great promise of the social market economy. Never again an economic power should be so large that they can dominate markets and undermine the foundations of democracy.

There are serious doubts among scientists about whether the emphasis on common values for Europe is at all effective. Although we like to speak about European values, but: What really are these values, it usually remains in the dark.

The various contributions to the discussion about the European Identity und values show two things:

- First, it is obvious that the EU is based on more on economic rules for unhindered trade between its countries and
- Secondly: what is actually the basis of values of the EU - and in some ways Europe as a whole? There is not unity about this.



**Figure 2. Trust in European Union**

*The Eurobarometer-survey by the European Commission confirms that trust in the European Union is very low. About one third of the Europeans have trust in the EU (Bart Van Craeynest, 2013)*

Other critical ideas to the identity debate have triggered strong reactions. The “Identity” is a term that cannot be built on a peace-loving and prosperous society. Identity is a symptom of our inability to accept the world, as it is and the future of Europe is not in a search for national identity. And certainly it is not the sum of national identities. Today's Europe, (l' Europe des Nations), is a relic of the past. It is a Europe, which is incapable of solving problems. And it is a Europe that is hardly plays a significant role in the world of the 21st century.

## 5. Conclusions

About Europe has been discussed and written a lot under a wide variety of aspects. The European Union is facing major challenges. From a small Coal and Steel Community, founded in the wake of two major European civil wars, an unprecedented success story has become almost sixty years. From six countries that have established an economic community we have 27 Member States today (from 1. July 2013 also Croatia joined the EU, becoming the 28<sup>th</sup> member), a Union with about half a billion people.

Many values are not clear defined, for example:

- The value of freedom is also in conflict with another value: the right to (awareness) physical intactness. How much control is necessary to ensure the safety of citizens, control that limit the freedom of one subject? How many

restrictions on the internet it must be to protect children from sexual abuse by people who trade child pornography?

- Much discussed is also the freedom of religion, which is a fundamental right. What this means in practice, however, if parents refuse their children surgery or blood transfusion for religious reasons? How do you deal with it when parents do not let their children for religious reasons to attend swimming lessons?

These are not easy questions and topics discussed almost daily. The examples show that it is not enough to commit to the basic values, but that the society must wrestle around the fundamental freedoms, in order to satisfy all requirements and to find compromises that meet various demands. As so often in politics and elsewhere in life, there is not “right” or “wrong”, but different concepts that need to coexist with each other. The discussion about the common values of the Europe is further complicated because it is not just a question of whether one is for or against a value, but in most cases, especially on the question of how to interpret the values and in what context this must take place. Finally in this paper I consider that the European values are universal human values. On one hand they are based on the belief that the Europe was built on the Greek philosophy, Roman law and Christianity. On the other hand the fundamentals of European Values are in the French Revolution in terms of: freedom, equality and fraternity, the system of parliamentary democracy and the social market economy and also the responsibility of man for his neighbor and the environment.

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