

Notes on the Manifesto¹

The text, its format, and its purpose

This text, conceived as a memento to the historic events that took place 100 years ago, is the script for the theatrical staging of the proclamation of the Republic. It has therefore deliberately been kept short and abstract. The reading aloud of the text should take no more than two minutes. The original recordings of several republican proclamations (for example, the proclamation of the Bavarian Republic in 1918 by Kurt Eisner) served as models for our text, as did the European manifestos of several European intellectuals (e.g. the 'Manifesto to the Europeans'²) from the years preceding the War and the interwar period. These texts always, even at that time, emphasised the universality of human rights and the necessity for social justice.

The text harks back to the almost simultaneous proclamation of a number of republics in November 1918, which in several cases led to the abdication of a ruling monarch and the establishment of a democracy based on universal political equality. By appropriating and/or drawing inspiration from the linguistic radicalism of the period, the text seeks to remind people of the fact that history today, as always, is contingent and open, and that the capacity of the citizens of Europe to bring about a new and different European constitutional settlement is an ever-present historical potentiality.

The date chosen for the theatrical staging of the proclamation is 10 November, because this date bridges and links 9 November (the anniversary of the Republican proclamations of 1918, of Kristallnacht in Nazi Germany, and of the Fall of the Berlin Wall)³ and 11 November (the end of the First World War, Armistice Day). The choice is intended to link these historic dates, to call the associated events to mind, and to use them to guide our thinking towards our common European future – towards a Europa reformata.⁴

Paragraph 1

The aim of the first sentence is to make clear that it is the citizens of Europe who are truly sovereign and therefore the agents of the project of European integration. They have complete freedom of action, regardless of what their respective governments do. We don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We want no more armed social or international conflicts fought out by the civilian populations on behalf of the strategic national or economic interests of particular governments. The first sentence is also intended to draw attention to the fact that the governments of the EU member states have been guilty of reckless inaction over the past ten years of crisis with regard to the institutional reforms needed in the EU and the eurozone. The political will required for the completion of the European integration project has been squandered. Many European citizens are sick and tired of the lack of ambition displayed by their governments over Europe.

¹ More texts, information and documentation on these issues, together with a comprehensive bibliography and links can be found on this website under the heading 'Material'. By this means we want to enable you to undertake further independent research on the subject of European democracy. In order to encourage a many-sided discussion and pluralistic opinions, there is a wealth of texts from a great variety of sources, including speeches on Europe by so-called populist politicians (e.g. Heinz-Christian Strache, Marine le Pen etc.) and by economists critical of Europe (e.g. Hans-Werner Sinn).

² https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Manifesto_to_the_Europeans

³ Additionally, 9 November 1938 & 9 November 1989 are historic dates for Europe.

⁴ 10 November is also Martin Luther's birthday.

Paragraph 2

The fundamental idea behind Europe, to quote Jean Monnet, was ‘not to integrate states, but to unify people’. All of the founding texts on European integration – for example, the Ventotene Manifesto of 1944 – emphasised that Europe would mean leaving behind the nation states so that the smaller states would no longer be dominated by the bigger ones (as however remains the case today). The fundamental idea behind Europe was also that of the legal equality of all European citizens and no discrimination on account of nationality, ethnicity, religion or sex. Today’s EU remains a long way from this vision. We call on the EU to put these original European goals firmly back on the political agenda. We also want to point out that the Maastricht Treaty (‘ever closer union’) is now part of EU constitutional law. We firmly believe that monetary and strategic policy, domestic, foreign and security policy, climate and refugee policy, social and fiscal policy, agricultural, trade and economic policy are all inextricably linked. We reject the current focus in the European debate on identitarian aspects and elements of national culture and wish instead to remind people that Europe is primarily a project for the creation of a shared civic and legal community which now requires the formation of a common legal framework for all European citizens. We likewise reject the ongoing rewriting of the European peace story into one of a ‘security union’ which focuses only on defence and betrays the principle of open European borders.

Paragraph 3

We want to remind people that today’s Europe is a legacy and intellectual product of the Enlightenment, and that it was rescued in the second half of the 20th century from the rubble of the two World Wars and the Holocaust and anchored in the European institutions. The first sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. Hannah Arendt observed in response that this is of course not true: in reality, many human beings are neither free nor equal in rights.⁵ However, it must be a precept of European politics that it should always be based on the principles of freedom and equality and their universal application. The European values of freedom, equality and solidarity are indivisible and not negotiable at the national level. It is the political responsibility of Europe to uphold this precept, above all in its handling of the refugee issue.⁶ In this way we also demonstrate our rejection of the increasing hatred, violence and racism seen in Europe today.

Paragraph 4

In this paragraph, we acknowledge the far-reaching findings of postcolonial studies and Europe’s share of responsibility for the root causes of mass migration, for example through the way it trades and farms, or through its climate change emissions or its direct political interventions in other parts of the world. We all have a common duty to abide by the agreements made at the Paris Climate Change Conference of December 2015 and to work to develop them further.⁷ We call on Europe to abandon its structural domination of trade and international exchange in favour of a fairer system. This manifesto can therefore be read as a gesture of atonement for 500 years of *white supremacy*. Here, the Manifesto draws explicitly

⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Freedom to be free*. See <http://hac.bard.edu/news/post/?item=18987>

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *We, Refugees...* Borka Parcovitsch: „*The refugees come to ask us who we are, and we need to answer them*“

⁷ <https://sdgactioncampaign.org/de/>

on Bruno Latour's '*Terrestrial Manifesto*',⁸ which extends the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to include the rights of animals and plants and declares the protection of the global commons – and within that of the global climate above all – to be the paramount precept of European politics.

Paragraph 5

The state and the market were uncoupled, and the Single Market and the euro were not embedded in a European democracy. There was no Social or Fiscal Union. The Citizens' Union promised in the Maastricht Treaty never materialised. The citizens are not sovereign in the European system. The legitimacy basis of the EU is problematic. We call for a *democratic* and *social* Europe.

The institutional and bureaucratic deficits of the EU and of euro-governance and their lack of political legitimation have fed the growth of populist parties across Europe and led to the collapse of entire party systems. The eurozone crisis, in the absence of mechanisms for political arbitration, has put creditors and debtors in direct and chauvinistic conflict. The EU is incapable of providing pan-European political arbitration. The vicious cycle of bank and public debt has not yet been broken. The European market and the European currency have yet to be embedded in a form of European statehood, even though a currency *is* in itself a social contract. Instead, during the eurozone crisis the citizens of Europe were played off against each other and individual nations were branded (in the media too) as scapegoats.

We are therefore calling for the completion of the European political project through the creation of a *common* democracy in which all European citizens are endowed with the same rights and duties with respect to elections, taxes and access to social rights. Equality before the law is a necessary condition for democracy.

Legal equality for goods and capital was introduced in each case by means of a treaty and a qualifying date rule.⁹ What is needed today is complementarity between these European treaty pillars: a common market – a common currency – a common democracy! So the final step required is the introduction of legal equality for European citizens, and specifically in those areas which affect them the most, namely taxes and social rights.¹⁰

In concrete terms, a membership number for a universal European social security and taxation system could be introduced by means of a 'Maastricht II' treaty and given to all new-born European children from a set date (for example, 01.01.2035), alongside protections for the existing acquired rights of older citizens. This would open the way for a gradual transition into a European commonwealth in which all European citizens would be bound together under a common European legal jurisdiction and would form a European civic community. In a parallel treaty process, the 19 current euro-countries would thus establish a common democracy, while the countries not yet part of the euro would first enter into the currency union and then introduce the European tax and social security number system, in a second step, as a visible expression of civic equality.

Paragraph 6

The key demand in the Manifesto is for the comprehensive parliamentarisation of the EU on the basis of 'one person, one vote'. This recalls the demand of the revolutionaries of 1918 for

⁸ Bruno Latour, „*Das Terrestrische Manifest*“ (English translation due to be published September 2018 as 'Down to Earth, Politics in the New Climatic Regime')

⁹ Single Market: Single European Act, 1986, with qualifying date 1992; Euro: Maastricht Treaty, 1992, with qualifying date 2002

¹⁰ E.g. GMEU: *Genuine Economic and Monetary Union*, 5-President Report, 2012

universal, *equal*, secret and direct elections. Because votes in the EP are weighted, European elections today are not yet *equal* for all European citizens.

This is not about centralisation, nor the transfer of competences to Europe, but about the separation of powers. It is about creating a European legislature with full power to make laws and the capacity to hold a future European executive branch to account.¹¹ The European Council, an untransparent and only partially legitimated decision-making body, will be abolished, just as the republican proclamations of 1918 abolished the monarchies. This will curtail the capacity of (some) EU member states to dominate European decision-making or to force through decisions which may be in their own national interest but do not reflect the wishes of a majority of all European citizens. The establishment of a European unemployment insurance system, for example, has been repeatedly blocked in the European Council, despite the fact that such a system would command a parliamentary majority among European citizens. Solidarity among the citizens of Europe is systematically underestimated.¹²

Current proposals for the establishment of a eurozone parliament or a euro-budget or a European finance minister are crucially dependent on a legitimacy basis, i.e. that the European parliament should have full authority to hold such a European finance minister to account, despite their different legitimacy bases, because control over the budget is the most important power of any parliament.

The European regions and cities could make up a second European parliamentary chamber based on practicable administrative units of 8-15 million inhabitants, thereby becoming constituent elements of the European Republic. This would preserve Europe's cultural diversity. Europe would be what it was always meant to be: a single but culturally diverse normative political entity. Nobody would lose their identity or their homeland. Europe would become a common democracy, without turning into a single, homogenous cultural stew. Equality before the law doesn't mean centralisation!

Paragraph 7

The central demand of the Manifesto – similar to 1918 – is that European citizens are given equality of rights and duties – in elections, taxation and social rights. This represents an opportunity for a great, continent-wide reconciliation following the crisis which shook the continent to its foundations, stirred up mutual suspicions and resentments again, and drove the citizens of Europe into the arms of sleazy populists who exploited the sufferings in their native countries for their nationalistic aims.

Statehood means the congruity of territory, currency and power. Europe must set out on the path to common statehood in order finally to acquire the capacity to act in all these policy areas and to set in train a major programme in innovation, education, digitalisation and ecological infrastructure financed out of a common budget. For that to happen, Europe needs a realistic prospect of tax sovereignty.

We urgently need a debate about the establishment of a common European government, elected from a representative parliament and fully in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers. And European statehood is needed to enable us to take a strategic lead in international progress towards the recognition of the global commons.

¹¹ Here we draw on similar demands, e.g. TDEM, *Traité pour la Démocratisation de l'Europe* (2017), by Antoine Vauchez, Guillaume Sacriste, Stéphanie Hennette-Vauchez and Thomas Piketty

¹² https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/studie-zur-solidaritaet-in-europa-deutlich-solidarischer.1008.de.html?dram:article_id=425139

This is why we now proclaim the European Republic, so as to avoid repeating the mistakes of the last century and to enable us to manage together, as a common enterprise, the leap of modernisation and digitalisation now required of us, rather than allowing it to set us against each other.

This is why we call on the citizens of Europe to reach out their hands, across the national boundaries, and to make the bold attempt to establish a European Republic based on the principle of universal political equality instead of allowing themselves once again to be exploited by national elites for populist chimeras!