



**'Looking for a different Europe.  
Reflections and perspectives'**

**Rome, 21<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

**FEPS Activity Report**

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The conference **Looking for a different Europe. Reflections and perspectives**, held in Rome on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017, was organised by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies together with seven national foundations – **Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Fondation Jean-Jaurés, Fondazione EYU, Fondazione Italianieuropei, Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Foundation Robert Krieps and Táncsics Alapítvány** – to reflect, on the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, on the current state of the project of European integration and on the need and ways to re-launch it.



The conference – that was held in the Sala Zuccari of the Senate of the Italian Republic – was opened by the speeches of **Michele Bordo**, Chairman of the European Union Policies Committee of the Italian Lower Chamber, and **Nicolas Schmit**, Minister for Labour, Employment, Social Economy and Economic Solidarity of Luxembourg. In their remarks they both underlined the advantages that being part of the European Union brought to the member states. But while Michele Bordo demanded a more equal and fair distribution of benefits and responsibilities among the member states, and the primacy of the supranational approach over the intergovernmental one, Nicholas Schmit focused on the responsibility that European progressive parties have had in the growing disillusionment of European citizens with the EU and the consequent growth of populist movements across the European continent. He claimed that the European Left gave in to the temptation of infallible markets, and was now paying a heavy political price for that choice. Yet, the

mission of the Left has always been that of ensuring the security to the European citizens, and it should do it again, but without betraying its own values and without turning Europe in a fortress. The European Union, he affirmed, needs a new social pact that promotes cohesion and convergence.

Speakers of the first panel of the conference – **Equity, growth, solidarity: The three pillars of the future of the European Union** – were **Péter Balázs**, Professor at the Central European University of Budapest, **Stephany Griffith-Jones**, Financial Markets Program Director at the Initiative for Policy Dialogue at Columbia University, and **Paolo Guerrieri**, Member of the Italian Senate and Professor of Economics at the University of Rome, moderated by **Ernst Stetter**, Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies. The three speakers focused on the unequal recovery from the economic and financial



crisis and the widening divergences among and within the member states. With different degrees of optimism, they underlined that Europe is growing, although at a still slow pace, while the level of investments in the member states is still insufficient, even in Germany. Employment creation and better income distribution were some of the solutions proposed. As for the future of European integration, it was agreed that closure and new forms of nationalisms are not viable solutions, but demagogic recipes that would have enormous costs. It is rather necessary to strengthen the governance of the Eurozone, harmonise fiscal policies and introduce some fiscal capacity. But above all, more solidarity among the member states is in the best interest of the Union as a whole.

The second panel – **More inclusive, more political, more democratic. Europe beyond populism** – was introduced by the opening remarks of **Vannino Chiti**, Chairman of the European Union Policies Committee of the Senate of the Republic, and featured **Enrique Barón**, Former President of the European Parliament, **Harlem Désir**, French Secretary of State for European Affairs, **Sandro Gozi**, Italian Undersecretary of State for European Affairs, **Michael Roth**, German Minister of State for Europe, and Vivien **Schmidt**, Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration at the University of Boston. The debate was moderate by **Lucia Annunziata**, editor of the Huffington Post Italia. The speakers agreed that the European Union needs to be completed, as it is in Europe and not in the return to the nation-states that solutions to the current crises can be found. The Monetary Union is not enough, Europe needs to strengthen the Economic Union and to create a Banking Union to ensure convergence, as well as a Social Union to fight against poverty, inequalities and

discrimination. As it is today, the EU is like a beautiful house without windows and without a roof. It is essential to fill the gap between European debates and national ones. Against this background and faced with the challenge posed by populism all over Europe, the role of the



European Left is not to be sorts of “good populists”, it is rather to provide genuine alternatives to the solutions to the sense of insecurity of the European citizens proposed by populist movements. Right wing populisms are today the biggest challenges to democracy. According to Vivien Schmidt, Europe is to be multicore rather than multispeed, while the

community method is to be preferred to the intergovernmental one.

The conference was closed by the speech of FEPS President **Massimo D’Alema**, who strongly claimed that the project of European integration has been an enormous success, which has brought undeniable achievements for the member states. European integration still constitutes a model of regional integration in other parts of the world. But the global scenario has changed to a great extent. Against the backdrop of a globalisation without governance, conflicts have multiplied, and an increasing number of people feel that national and cultural identities need to be protected. The European Union shall react to this trend, as in a world of great powers, a Europe made of nation-states could only be marginalised. And to react, a group of willing member states shall increase cooperation in a number of fields, such as defence and foreign policies. And it shall do so, without forgetting its founding values: dialogue, respect and protection of human rights, peace. Speaking about a multispeed Europe is oversimplifying the problem. First of all we shall put Europe in motion again.