

Democracy and federalism. Let's federate the federalists and educate the people of Europe about federalism

Leo Klinkers

We still have to explain a lot about federalism

Milan, 21 September 2018

Over the years, the Eurobarometer has shown that the majority of European citizens are in favor of Europe. However, if you ask people whether they would vote in favor of a federal Europe, at least 90% would reject this option.

Yet what do we hear, if we were to ask individual European citizens the following questions? Mind you: I have done this exercise many times before.

1. **Do you want your country to be and to remain sovereign?** The answer will undoubtedly be 99% yes, 1% do not know and 0% no.
2. **Do you want to preserve the cultural identity of your country?** So, do you want to preserve your republic or monarchy, your language, your specific morals and customs, your diversity of values, your regional differences and your dialects? Believe me, at least 95% say yes, 4% say no and 1% do not know.
3. **Do you think that there are common problems or interests that can only be solved through cross-border cooperation between countries?** The answer will likely be: 85% yes, 10% no and 5% don't know.
4. **Should the EU take care of (a limited number of) common interests only, leaving other interests to be the domain of the individual countries?** The answer is clear: 99% for subsidiarity and 1% do not know.
5. **Should the common interests be taken care of from a joint European perspective or from a national perspective?** So, do you want separate Italian, German, French and Dutch defense policy - or an integrated European defense policy? The answer will probably be in the order of 80% for an integrated European approach, 15% non-integration and 5% do not know.
6. **Do you think that connectivity between Member States - in whatever form - should have the power to actually implement measures?** I believe that the answer will be: 95% yes, 4% no and 1% do not know.

7. **Do you think that a connectivity between Member States - in whatever form - should have democratic legitimacy?** Would we be surprised if the answer were to be: 95% yes, 4% no and 1% do not know?

This outcome - gathered in many discussions for a number of years - confronts us with a strange contradiction. If we ask Europeans directly whether they would like a federal Europe, then at least 90% will strongly protest. If we ask them the previous questions, their answers go directly in the direction of a choice for a federal Europe, because those answers indicate exactly what a federation has to offer.

There is only one explanation for this strange contradiction: the people at large do not know what federalism is. In general, the people of Europe are unaware of the true nature of federalism. They do not know that it is precisely a federal state that preserves and guards the sovereignty, autonomy and cultural identity of Member States. And guarantees democratic decision-making. They do not know that a federal body will be set up to serve just a small, limitative list of common interests that can no longer be taken care of by an individual state. This lack of basic knowledge leads citizens to listen to false prophets who make them believe that a federation is a superstate, intent to destroy the sovereignty of the Member States. The opposite is true. Not only does everything that is dear to the Member States remain intact, but they are even given extras, such as a better protection of their shared interests.

In order for the people of Europe to become acquainted with the true nature of federalism, federating the federalists is an important means of transferring the necessary knowledge to the people. It will not be easy. But it can be done. And it must be done if we want to prevent Europe from no longer having any meaning on the scene of geopolitical shifts in the coming years.

I will myself start a series of lectures in my country. Lectures for small groups. I shall ask these seven fore mentioned questions, counting the scores in a spreadsheet. My intention is to continue giving these lectures until the election of the European Parliament in May 2019. Then I shall publish the results. I challenge every federalist to do the same: gather small groups, put forward these seven questions, count the score in a spreadsheet and let us then, around April 2019, combine all scores to create an impressive document.