

Danuta Hübner
Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament

Future of the European Union

Plenary debate on the future of the EU
14 February 2017, European Parliament, Strasbourg

As Chair of AFCO I feel proud that after more than two years of work we have reached this moment when a clear message on the future of the EU can come out of this house.

When we look at its history, the European Union has always grown through reforming itself. Today, reforms must signify urgency and pragmatism, but also vision and ambition.

It is true that a lot can and must be done at the national level. But it is essential to understand that we are strong because we have agreed upon and jointly created a system of European institutions. Institutions, which protect us against the risk of abandoning the core shared values that hold us together, which are also guardians of the interdependence created over decades of integration, and which have to progress and deliver efficiently.

The convergence machinery must gather pace.

Country-specific situations must be taken care of but not at the expense of undermining European capacity to act, of fragmentation or of discarding the community method of integration.

A new approach to the working method of the Union should respond to the growing demand for a more accountable, transparent, and participatory decision-making system. We should continuously seek improvements to the way European institutions work, generously exploiting the potential offered by new technologies.

Most of us agree that many badly needed reforms can be introduced within the existing treaty framework, and we should fully use this potential.

But it is our duty to look seriously into those areas where, without treaty change, Europe's capacity to respond to people's legitimate fears, needs and ambitions will remain limited. We cannot afford it.

The reports we are discussing today give us an opportunity to actively contribute to the future of the Union. This future is our responsibility. We are responsible for this future.