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"The EU political challenges for 2019-2024"

11 June 2019, EPP Study Days, San Sebastian

During the last five years I have spent quite some time meeting you, colleagues from national parliaments during the debates in the framework of COSAC, but also thorough our Inter- parliamentary dialogue that most of the Committees of the European Parliament hold systematically. My feeling today is that in the next five years we will need a dialogue with you even more often.

This meeting, on the European elections and challenges for the future, is important for us. For the first time in the history of the European Parliament soon we will be implementing the 2016 Inter-institutional Agreement with the European Commission and the Council on Better Law Making. This agreement introduces a new tradition of multi-annual programing concluded jointly by the three institutions at the beginning of the institutional cycle. Listening to you will enrich our vision.

I would like to share with you my own takeaways from the recent European elections which I believe were not mentioned during our discussions so far. These elections were different from what European elections used to be. The turn out, higher than usually, has given us a stronger legitimation to speak on behalf of European citizens, our voters. In my home country, Poland, the participation rate doubled. I can only hope that this is just a good beginning of a good change in the future.

But my first takeaway is about European content of these elections. My judgment is that they were not about 28 separate stories. It is true that there were many local components in our conversations with voters but, clearly, there were expectations directed by citizens toward Europe. People saw gains coming from the Union. People spoke and they said with their votes that they wanted Europe to live,

not just to survive on the old crumbs of the past glory but to live on vital life giving renewal of imagination.

Our voters have made it clear across Europe that they expect responses from the Union to their concerns. These elections have put on the European agenda the same issues across Europe. Disappointing the citizens cannot be an option. We have no other choice but to make these issues a central part of our agenda for the years to come.

My second takeaway refers to the fact that when we look at the results of the elections there is a good chance that we will have a constructive, engaged parliament with a solid, stable, pro-European majority. And a lot depends on us, the biggest political group whose responsibility of aiming at establishing consensual politics platform is enormous. Here, obviously, we would need your help at national level. Elections showed, in my view, that two components should matter and become a crucial part of the consensual agenda. First, a more forceful what we used to call sustainable development, meaning not only climate crisis and environmental requirements but also what we adopted in November 2017 in Goeteborg which is the pillar of social Europe. And second, a stronger insistence on fundamentals of the European Union, meaning values and rule of law.

In this context, let me underline that in our group a work will have to be done to see all national delegations feel part of this emerging consensual politics and avoid creeping disengagement and fragmentation. Here, again, we will have to work together with national parliamentarians.

My third takeaway is about open source democracy. Elections have given a lot of evidence that a network democracy based on solidarity of various groups - grass root organizations, women, climate activists, urban activists, creators, youth - is becoming a canvass and a harbinger of European democracy, pushing back populists movements.

As a political family we, at European, national, regional, local governance levels should aim for and support such a forward looking, participatory, open source

democracy through which Europe will be delivering its European level policies. Of course, to overcome autocrats we have to propose a better package for citizens, not only political and economic, but embracing an improvement of the quality of life and inclusion of all. The challenge now is not to let populist movements to capture this innovative democratic practice. They can take control of Europe through this network democracy if we miss this moment.

My fourth takeaway in this context is about subsidiarity. In this new democratic reality, we should see the growing risk of new populist expansion and abuse or misuse of subsidiarity. We should be vigilant and not allow populist politicians to capture the principle of subsidiarity in bad faith, against Europe and European citizens, aiming at dismantling what we have together built for more than sixty years.

Maybe together with you from national parliaments we can look anew on subsidiarity. This system can benefit from enhanced dialogue between us, from greater intensity of contacts, from more effective information sharing, from better focusing of inter parliamentary meetings. More than ever subsidiarity should be seen as sharing responsibility and things to do, identifying and implementing part of common objectives at each level of European governance. This “updated” implementation of subsidiarity system under network democracy requires trust, transparency, pro dialogue leadership and engagement of citizens.

I am saying that because in times when major consequences of global challenges are felt locally, a network democracy brings a reinterpretation of democratic practice which in turn will lead to a wider participation of local communities in shaping European policies. We have to be prepared for that.

To conclude, allow me to be optimistic. With these elections we have received legitimization to restore European dream, to re-imagine European project, to make European policies relevant for people, to re-engage European citizens and reassemble around European agora.

My feeling is that what we used to call - you might remember - European demos is coming into being not through an imposed European identity but through gathering of people around concrete policies, concrete achievements, through participatory politics. Voters proved to be pragmatic and rational. They did not cherish the totems of national identities. They went for real gains and achievable results Europe can offer and deliver. We have to build consensual politics around it.