

Europe - a Dream?

By Gerd Eisenbeiß, Bonn, February 22, 2016

EUROPE – that was my dream since I was 14.

Later, this dream became concrete: a single market for several 100 million citizens, common values, adaptation of common norms and standards especially in the environmental area, elimination of internal borders, international representation as single bloc, within NATO, also common defense.

Much seemed so clearly beneficial to all citizens and states that lasting consensus seemed assured. And it was so logical that a single market can not function without increasingly common environmental standards.

This logic of common advantages resulting from acting in unison should still be obvious to any reasonable person today. The EU has become a peaceful habitat of freedom for 500 million people – a success story without historical example, rightly honored with the Nobel prize.

But where did reason leave us? Why isn't there joy and pride about these achievements, about the higher standard of living and about historically unprecedented safety?

More and more politicians insincerely try to convince their citizens today by blaming the (European) Union for any difficulties and, therefore, claiming that solutions can be found on national state level only, i.e. in isolationist self-centered actions.

I see two main reasons for this - a self-inflicted one and one which is caused by external forces.

Self-inflicted is the failing of the Monetary Union. The strategically well-intentioned €-introduction, expected to lead to closer integration, is failing due to the excessive heterogeneity of national economies involved. Perhaps, the common currency could have succeeded if the world financial crisis, would not have amplified brutally this heterogeneity. What an idle question!

Greece can keep the € only if the partner countries continue to increase Greece's debt burden through new loans. The Iberian elections have shown that the Spanish and Portuguese voters also demand relief through increased debt. Recognizably, the French and Italians do not succeed either to realize the consolidation path which they jointly agreed.

Externally caused is the immigration from crisis- and poverty-stricken areas. The key question is: shall the fugitives live with us or elsewhere? Some of the

Europeans, under the leadership of Angela Merkel, answered "in doubt with us" - a decreasing part of all members of the European public! The others want to stop the fleeing somewhere before their borders where they certainly cannot affect them and, if possible, cannot be seen there.

Using the Slovak government as an example: the considerable problems that Western Europe has, particularly with Muslim minorities, is very clearly observed from there. One is pleased not to have Muslims on one's own territory, and one wants things to stay the way they are. In addition, one perceives that no refugee wants to come to Slovakia. Then, why on earth should one let Muslim refugee quotas into the country?

If Germans were asked whether more Muslims are desired, there would certainly be a spectacular majority against it. Also, I would rather prefer to export Enlightenment than to import Middle Ages. What, nonetheless, lets me and other citizens be for accepting refugees of all religions, is only the realization that we can not prevent them from coming in a humane way, and that our country (in contrast to Slovakia) is wealthy enough to help.

It is a sad realization that the EU as a community of common values is not united in bearing the load of refugees on equal just terms. We will have to deal with that situation. But Germany will have to adapt too; specifically, we have to accept that the bulk of the war and economic refugees be contained and accommodated in internment camps outside our borders or that of the Schengen region, i.e. in camps in states closest to the crisis flashpoints.

In the near future Germany will also have to accept that refugee boats can no longer dock in EU ports.

The rising number of Germans voting for the AFD are the indicator of a heated-up political atmosphere which, for the sake of our constitutional democracy, can no longer be ignored.

The EU will break apart if the influx of refugees is not stopped. And Turkey will not do us the favor to accept and keep all refugees from the Near and Middle East. Under Erdogan, Turkey will merely continue it's extortion practice that Europe, i.e. probably Germany, has to transfer more and more money, that his Kurdish policy is no longer to be criticized, and, on top, that the EU has to self-destruct by granting Turkey EU membership.

Even after further summits, a robust and reliable Turkish cooperation is not to be expected.

In addition to the self- and foreign-inflicted reasons of failure there are yet other nasty problems within the EU. The most offensive ones are **Hungary and the UK**. Hungary because it has denounced the European consensus on common

European values openly and with overwhelming support of its citizens – in Poland, at least the vague hope exists that the PIS government, which gained absolute power with only 37% of the total vote, could also be thrown out of office again.

England, for purely selfish reasons, just blackmailed the rest of the EU. But the "compromise" found is so harmless and so disappointing for the vascillating British EU opponents that I sincerely hope the United Kingdom will definitely say goodbye to Europe on June 23 (and then probably from Scotland too which wants to remain in the EU).

With England leaving the Union, the EU concept could survive if “the cards would be reshuffled” for a fresh start of all countries which want to stay together. Perhaps, then, a little less heterogeneous EU II may emerge comprising possibly a nucleus of Germany, Benelux, France, Italy, Austria and Spain --- or perhaps not. The latter would mean: END OF THE DREAM!

I would have given much not to have to experience this and to leave my grandchildren an economically, politically and morally strong Europe.

Einstein got it correct not only with predicting gravitational waves but also with the observation that both the cosmos and human stupidity are infinite.

(translated by Hansmartin Hertlein)