



Jesuit European Office

Elections: 4-7 June 2009



Election Memorandum

It's your choice ...

In June, Europeans elect the members of the next European Parliament. The European Union seems to many a bureaucratic entity far removed from Europe's citizens. But a careful vote in the elections is one way of strengthening the democratic accountability of the EU.

We at the Jesuit European Office in Brussels have chosen to focus briefly on certain themes that seem to us to deserve voters' particular attention. A short memo can only indicate a few salient points, but further information is available through the links provided.

The four issues we have chosen illustrate our approach to the kind of choices currently facing the European Union, in its internal life and in its relationship with the wider world. We can be selective since we also point our readers to three other election statements, which we willingly commend: those of our

colleagues at the ecumenical Conference of European Churches, based in Brussels; of the network of Europe-based Catholic religious orders working in Africa, the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN); and of the international Catholic lay movement, Christian Initiative for Europe (IXE).

It is important to vote, and to consider our vote carefully. Yet elections take place only occasionally and are not, of themselves, the full expression of democracy. We are also well aware that certain proposals we make in this leaflet may not command general public assent or be immediately achievable: we propose directions, not instant remedies. From this perspective we add to our four policy commentaries a reflection about the nature of democracy itself as an expression of human dignity and human community.

European Solidarity

Solidarity is one of the foundations of the construction of the European Union, together with pluralism, non-discrimination and tolerance. These foundations aim to promote such values as human dignity, freedom, democracy and the respect for human rights. Solidarity seeks to distribute burdens in a fair way, diminish inequality and promote widespread opportunities.

Social protection and inclusion

Solidarity within each country concerns matters of social protection and inclusion. In 2007, more than eighty million people in the EU lived below the agreed poverty threshold. Children, single-parent families and the elderly are the principal groups at risk.

Social protection is especially important in the case of unemployment. In any household, the loss of a job threatens family life. For young people, unemployment denies them opportunities to develop personal projects and professional skills; women's unemployment highlights the remaining inequality of the labour market.

Social protection and inclusion in the EU is formally the responsibility of member states. Nevertheless, several strategies have been proposed at EU level: to eradicate child poverty, to promote inclusive labour markets and eliminate financial exclusion. The EU struggles to overcome discrimination against those with disabilities, ethnic minorities and immigrants and to promote their social integration.

Europe's rising age profile challenges states' capacity to sustain their pensions systems, since the increasing number of retired people requires extra resources in terms of income support and health care.

Solidarity among European states

Solidarity within Europe has been understood among the EU's member states mainly as economic and social cohesion. To promote cohesion, the EU has established such financial instruments as the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, each of which aims to reduce systematic disparities between regions and to promote equal opportunities.

The EU's enlargement to twenty-seven states has posed a major new challenge for cohesion. While the EU's territory and population have grown significantly, its wealth has remained static, and regional disparities have almost doubled. This imbalance demands sustained and vigorous action.

External Relations

The EU rightly declares its solidarity with other countries, both within and beyond Europe. This commitment implies that its foreign relations policy is at the service of peace, human rights and democratic development – in short, the promotion of equitable global relations. The EU has special duties to its neighbour countries.



Our proposals

Since poverty still manifestly exists within the EU, the commitment to eradicate it should lie at the heart of our political concerns. Social protection should be targeted at the most vulnerable groups, such as children, the sick and the elderly. Welfare systems should ensure where possible that these groups are not only the recipients of benefits, but contribute to policy-making. Social protection should ensure sustainable pensions systems. Health protection should be universal and accessible to all.

By definition, social inclusion policies



are aimed at those who are systematically marginalised. Such policies need

to operate at the economic, social and cultural levels, so that the wider society acknowledges and respects the contribution of minorities.

Employment is a fundamental element of social integration and of family well-being. Terms of employment must therefore enable workers

and their families to be responsibly independent. Especially in periods of economic crisis it is vital to protect and promote employment and to assure to the unemployed a dignified standard of living. Benefit systems must protect those in need as long as necessary, whilst promoting an active search for employment.

Solidarity between member states, particularly towards new members and their citizens, remains a serious challenge for the EU. The financial instruments of this solidarity need to be guaranteed. The EU asserts principles of transparency in the political, economic and judicial fields: however, states' failings in this respect must not lead to the penalising of their population.

The EU regards itself as a global advocate for peace and justice. To be consistent, it must direct its remarkable economic, political and scientific capacities towards promoting just and collaborative international relations. The economic and social cohesion that is good for Europe is no less good for the world at large.



Migration and Europe

Defensive EU policies

Despite current efforts there is no common European migration policy. The free movement of persons is acknowledged as a basic right within the EU, though not yet fully implemented. In the case of Bulgarian and Romanian workers, restrictions could last until 2014.

The main focus of the current harmonisation process is not that of human rights, the legal status of migrants, or the assurance of their social rights. Instead, emphasis falls on the control of borders and on effective procedures to admit migrants already holding a work contract – that is, those whom Europe needs for its labour force. Meanwhile more restrictive conditions are enforced for asylum.

Population movements

Poverty and lack of opportunities are the main causes of population displacement. The EU does not subscribe to the UN convention which applies the framework of human rights to migrant workers and their families. Yet it is the right of migrants to seek basic security for themselves and their families.

Europe has a long tradition of offering asylum to people forced to abandon their countries because of racial, political, religious or social threats. In our own day, environmental destruction has become an equally important factor. Recent European regulations make it increasingly difficult to gain acceptance as refugees.

Entry and residence conditions

This matter is primarily treated as one of security. There is a lack of protection in third countries that serve as gateways to Europe.

Circular migration, the possibility of working temporarily in Europe, is presented as the model for a triple gain: the worker can migrate to Europe; Europe can find the labour force it needs, whereas the worker will not stay forever, and the country of origin will acquire trained personnel, who may also have capital to become entrepreneurs.

The 'Blue Card' scheme recognises that migrants can make great contributions to

European societies. But it is vital to prevent a brain drain at the expense of the developing world, to ensure ethical recruitment practices, and to protect and strengthen the human resources of developing countries: for example, by investing in education.

Participation and social cohesion

The promotion of integration is essential across a wide range of EU policies: employment, intercultural dialogue, the promotion of fundamental rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities, women's rights, education and professional training, and the appropriate defence of migrants' language and traditions.



Our Proposals

Access to asylum and protection needs to be extended to those who flee their homes because of violence and war. The EU must ensure that the forcibly displaced can reach our territory and engage in a fair and transparent procedure that assesses their claims.

The EU should establish open and clear admission channels. It should make information on employment opportunities available to prospective migrants, so as to curb irregular migration. We need EU policies which prevent people from risking



their lives, from being plunged into the shadow economy and being abused

or exploited.

The EU should not criminalise migrants. The control of irregular migrants is shifting from the courts to governmental bodies (inevitably less independent than courts) thus diminishing migrants' protection.

Irregular migrants who can demonstrate their integration in the labour market and in society need to have a clear path to legal recognition.

Conditions to obtain residence permits vary hugely from country to country. Harmonisation needs to be pursued, though with a clear commitment to human rights.

In seeking to harmonise legislation about irregular migration, member states have reinforced provisions that force migrants to return to their countries. They have also toughened the conditions for those migrants already expelled. In the returns procedure it is unacceptable to treat minors as adults.

In the case of circular migration it is not clear that a system of multi-entry visas will be established, nor how family reunification will be treated. Without clarity on these elements, circular migration would become a distorted procedure harmful to migrants.

By making family reunification more difficult, governments seriously undermine families. Governments should give recognition to married couples, their right to be united with their children and their access to services. The UN Migrant Workers' Convention clearly establishes such rights.

More information

European Migration Network: <http://emn.sarenet.es/html/index.html>

JRS Europe: <http://www.jrseurope.org/index.htm>

Migration Policy Group: <http://www.migpolgroup.com/>



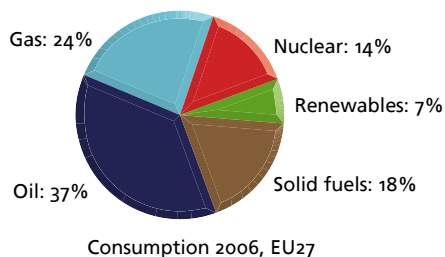
Energy in Europe

In December 2008, the European Council adopted a climate-energy package. This decision put the EU in the forefront of the fight against global warming through an ambitious new energy policy. By 2020 the EU is to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 20%, improve energy efficiency by 20%, and diversify in order to ensure that 20% of its energy comes from renewable sources (the so-called '20-20-20-objective'). The aims of this triple policy are economic, strategic and environmental. They should improve Europe's competitiveness by reducing energy costs, lessen the EU's dependence on outside suppliers, and contribute to the crucial global reduction of greenhouse emissions – one of the main factors of climate change.

The energy mix

Oil remains the primary element of the EU's fuel mix. Reliance on solid fuels has declined because of the pollution they cause, whereas gas and nuclear power have increased their share. Renewables, with a 7% share, remain far from the 20% target proposed for 2020.

The mix varies widely among member states. The UK, for example, relies mainly on oil and gas, of which it is a major producer. Other countries



consume mostly oil, others again mainly solid fuels, which they in turn produce. Some countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Lithuania and Sweden) have opted for a larger share of nuclear power, and others are considering a similar shift.

Energy Dependence

The EU imports roughly 54% of the energy it consumes. Oil is the largest import, since the EU produces less than 20% of its total consumption. Most of its imports come from the OPEC states and Russia. The EU's gas production covers less than half its consumption, the main suppliers being Russia, Norway, Algeria and, in the future, possibly Iran.



Once again the situation varies significantly from country to country. Denmark is almost energy-independent, Poland and the UK import around 20% of their energy, whereas Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain import more than 80%.

Energy and environment

The EU emitted fewer greenhouse gases in 2006 than in 1990. CO₂ emissions have steadily declined, though again the record is mixed. Sweden, the UK and Germany are doing well, whereas Spain and Denmark are far from their targets. Energy industries generate the highest proportion of Europe's CO₂ emissions, followed by transport and manufacturing.

Our Proposals

The debate must reflect the fact that energy use, a central aspect of environmental politics, is not merely a technical question. It is inseparable from our lifestyles as, for example, through transport policy and through the impact of pollution on health. It determines many modes of development as well as affecting European economic competitiveness.

We affirm the '20-20-20-objective'. It needs to be pursued without delay. It is especially important to cultivate the use of renewables, which are inherently sustainable, and to promote them through research.



The EU's commitment to solidarity

should promote the intra-European flow of oil and gas supplies as well as a more comprehensive electricity network. Therefore the EU needs good and stable relationships with

its suppliers through procedures to establish fair prices and political and technical co-operation. In several cases these are neighbouring countries.

Europe's drive to secure its energy requirements should not entail distortions in international trade, for example in food markets. It is unacceptable that the promotion of biofuels should threaten people's access to food, water or land.

Finally we wish to insist that sustainability cannot be achieved by technological means alone. Nor is it only Europe's sustainability that is in question, it is that of the entire world. Therefore, as well as shifting to a reliance on renewable energy sources, Europeans will need to limit their consumption, and to accept reduced standards of comfort and convenience. The EU will need political courage to propose such lifestyle changes, and European citizens will have to show solidarity to welcome them.



EU politics and development

EU development policies are marked by a some incoherence, caused by a set of tensions between the EU's wish both to defend its own interests and to support the needs of the developing world. While the founding principles of the EU and its long-term view would lead to a greater degree of global economic and social justice, some of its policies seem to undermine this goal.

Fundamental Right to Food

European agricultural and commercial policies have not sufficiently incorporated the universal right to food. Some new European energy policies irresponsibly encourage the diversion of essential food sources towards energy production.

Social role of food

In exporting its surplus food at cut price, the EU has contributed to the destruction of local food supply-chains and to the destabilisation of fragile markets in the developing world. The destruction of rural economies lead to hunger and malnourishment, to the abandonment of rural areas, and to migratory pressures.

Sustainable agriculture

In encouraging food exports to the South, the EU has provoked competition between subsistence farming (mainly of small farmers and women) and cash crops for export (dominated by corporations, often European). The farm tenancies of the cash crop system threaten essential elements of food security, such as land, water, seed and biological diversity.

Our proposals

The EU must respect the right to food in its entire policy framework. In particular, it should decline to support food exports that compete directly or indirectly with subsistence agriculture.

The EU's agriculture policy must take into account the basic interests of developing countries. It should halt the cut-price exports that threaten food security. In this way it can also lessen the volatility of food prices.



Natural Resources

A country's effective development relies heavily on sufficient access to its natural resources. The EU is doubly concerned with this issue. It imports natural resources to stimulate its own economy and it exerts political influence on development decisions in poorer countries. An analysis of the EU's policies in this matter illustrates the tensions resulting from this double perspective.

Natural resources and peace

The economic potential of natural resources often leads to conflicts. Good management of such resources



is therefore fundamental to peace and to the stability of the state itself. It

must foster equity in the sharing of profits.

Natural resources and development

The effective governance of natural resources can provide for a state the means necessary for its own functioning. The EU's development assistance must be preserved from becoming primarily a framework of commercial agreements to its own advantage.

Natural resources and environment

Without binding regulations, whether in the host state or internationally, the exploitation of natural resources often entails severe environmental destruction, to the harm of local populations.

Our proposals

EU policies which touch developing countries must be coherent. Human rights in the recipient country count more than every economic factor.

EU policy on the importing of primary resources from developing countries must explicitly recognise the interests of those countries.

The EU should adopt binding regulations in respect of the social responsibilities of its transnational corporations. European courts need extra-territorial jurisdiction in respect of the overseas acts of European corporations. The EU should promote the adoption of equivalent global measures by the United Nations.

The EU should develop a certification system in respect of natural resources, so as to end their illegal exploitation.



Liberalisation of Trade

While the development policies of the EU aim to eradicate poverty, its trade policies seek to liberalise commerce in goods, services and investment. This liberalisation has three negative results:

- it limits the capacity of governments to shape development policies affecting themselves;
- it prevents national authorities from protecting themselves against the destruction of their agriculture and industry, the loss of their tax revenue, and unfair competition on the part of foreign corporations;
- it favours the over-exploitation, even to the point of exhaustion, of developing countries' natural resources.

So far, the priority of EU policy has been the competitive advantage of European companies, even to the detriment of developing countries. The EU's trade policies should promote sustainable development everywhere. People's basic needs come before commercial gain.

Our proposals

Every EU commercial contract must be based on justice and equity. Each contract is to be assessed for its socio-economic impact on the host population.

Food supplies, health care, education, water and energy are essential to human well-being. They must not be treated as subject to commercial criteria.

Pressure from the international financial institutions on the poorest countries to liberalise goods and services must cease. Such liberalisation has been a frequent condition of international aid or debt-relief.

The EU's Economic Partnership Agreements should promote poverty-reduction, sustainable development and regional integration. These agreements need to protect products and services essential to the national economy, which are thereby to be excluded from liberalisation. Any liberalisation must allow for sufficient transition periods.



Full text on *EU politics and development* in French: [Download PDF](#)

More information about natural resources and European regulation

European Coalition for Corporate Justice
<http://www.corporatejustice.org/>

IPIS, International Peace Information Service
<http://www.ipisresearch.be/natural-resources.php>

CAFOD, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
<http://www.cafod.org.uk/key-issues/mining>

Fatal Transactions
<http://www.fataltransactions.org/Dossiers/DR-Congo-Violent-mining-profits>

CIDSE, international network of Catholic development agencies
http://www.cidse.org/Area_of_work/?id=52

RAID, Rights and Accountability in Development
http://raid-uk.org/work/corp_acct.htm



Principles of Democracy

What is democracy?

How democracy functions depends on how people understand it. In particular, if democracy is interpreted to mean only that people struggle to gain a majority to secure their own interests, it will inevitably harm minorities.

There is, however, a richer understanding of democracy. Our faculty of reason enables us to allow other people and their thoughts to be 'represented within ourselves', so that we can put ourselves in their situation. We can choose to act towards others as we would wish them to act towards us.

This human ability to bear others in mind can turn our mind into a kind of parliament, where we have a seat and a voice not alone, but with others. Before making decisions, we can consider the interests of all concerned, so that the outcome minimises harm for all. By respecting this procedure, democracy in the political world, the rule of the majority, may genuinely promote the well-being of all.

The reasoned conviction that we are essentially persons and communities together, has underpinned the whole of this Memorandum.

Representative democracy

Europe's tradition is one of representative rather than of direct democracy. That is, people elect representatives to make policy on their behalf. In almost all European societies, referenda are exceptional events. We elect representatives for their own qualities, their perceived trustworthiness and skills. They are to use their own judgment, authorised by their election. They must be attentive to popular opinion, but are not puppets. There is nevertheless an alternation of power. The representatives who govern us will again be governed by us in the next election.

Nevertheless – in an increasingly globalised world – representative democracy needs participative democracy as its counterpart. Participation is not about making final decisions, but about the possibility to contribute to the solution of problems.

Representative and participatory structures reflect the principle that 'what concerns all may be treated by all'. Democracy needs well-informed citizens. Our representatives have a double task: to be competent in the issues to be decided, and to be open to people's participation. Structures for participative democracy are still scarcely established and embedded in the European Institutions.



Proportionality

The Treaty of Lisbon has a protocol on the application of the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. All legal measures of the Union must be proportionate. To be proportionate means to take account of the need for any burden falling upon the Union, national governments, and other bodies to be minimised and commensurate with the objective to be achieved. We might add: burdens must be minimised for everyone, including people beyond Europe. European policy must have a universal horizon.



Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is proportionality extended into the area of

political method. Decisions are taken as closely as possible to those most affected by them. The higher authority in society should only intervene to strengthen the lesser authority, or when the lesser cannot resolve the problems. So, by the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Union restrains itself from intervening unnecessarily in decisions proper to member states. They in turn should respect regional and local decision-making.

The application of the principle of subsidiarity is rarely self-evident, since local decisions often affect people far beyond the locality.

Our proposal

The structures of the EU are a complex mix of community structures (the Union acting as a whole), and intergovernmental structures (the member states acting in negotiation and sometimes in competition). The EU also has well-established instruments for consulting the regions. However, as a union of both states and citizens, the EU still needs to find adequate procedures for citizen participation.



Election statements we recommend

Conference of European Churches (CEC)

<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/EuropeUpdate22EPElectionsJune2009.pdf>

Christian Initiative for Europe (IXE)

<http://www.initiative-ixe.eu/Call-to-the-citizens-of-Europe-on.html>

Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)

http://www.aefjn.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=428&Itemid=64

See also the European Parliament's election website

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2009/default.htm>

A [brief declaration](#) on the European Elections by the bishops of COMECE

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