

Declaration of the Brussels convention

Europe
1981

DECLARATION DE LA CONVENTION DE BRUXELLES

L' Alliance libre européenne (A.L.E.) est une association de coopération réunissant des partis politiques qui se distinguent des schémas de pensées politiques traditionnels dans la mesure où ils mettent au premier plan un régionalisme intégral. Cette conception repose sur l'interaction fructueuse entre l'identité individuelle et l'identité du peuple et trouve son expression structurelle dans les décisions démocratiques harmonisées suivant le modèle fédéral, ces décisions étant prises au niveau le plus bas possible, elle reconnaît la valeur de la diversité. La justice sociale est une des valeurs fondamentales de cette conception.

Cataloguing data

Title (English-original language)

Declaration of the Brussels convention

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European Free Alliance (EFA)

Date and place

9 July 1981, Strasbourg

Region(s)

Europe

Language(s)

English

Type of document

Ideological declaration

Reference Code

EFA0003

Keywords

Europe of nations, collective rights, European Union, federalism, economy, culture, social justice

Context

The European Free Alliance is seeking a democratic social structure, based on the desire to develop freely and to build the structures necessary for this purpose.

Abstract

The European Free Alliance is a cooperative association of political parties which, in contrast with established traditional patterns of political thought, advocate a form of integrated regionalism. This concept is based on meaningful interplay between the individual and national identity and is given structural form in a harmonious, democratic decision-making process on federal lines whereby decisions are taken at the lowest possible level and the greatest importance is attached to individuality. Social justice is one of its fundamental principles.

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The following text sets out the guiding lines for cooperation between the EFA-partners. It sets out and defines the common goal of these parties as the creation of a Europe of the peoples while respecting the individuality of each party.

In the text, the concepts of confederalism, regionalism, federalism and autonomy are all embraced by the term 'federalism'. The different parties are free to use these terms as they see it. The text constitutes the minimum program approved by the signatory parties. However, this does not prevent a party from giving greater emphasis to specific aspects of the program when placing it before its own public in its own region.

1. The efa and regionalism

1.1. The European Free Alliance is seeking a democratic social structure, based on the desire to develop freely and to build the structures necessary for this purpose.

1.2. In order to put this federalism into practice, both government and public authorities must be structured or transformed so as to enable the individual to realize to the fullest possible extent his own individuality and his place in society.

This realization of individuality must therefore be rooted in the fundamental recognition of the equality of all individuals. This implies positive respect for the individual's conception of life, his religious and philosophical beliefs in an active spirit of tolerance and with the guarantee that his personal lifestyle can be followed. Such respect is, moreover, conducive to the best interests of society and the cohesion of all its members.

1.3. The natural community in which the individual can fulfill himself is the ethnic community or, if the size of the ethnic community would put government too far away from the individual, the region. In any event this community must be characterized on the human level by a homogeneity of history or culture, or geography or economic life, or all of them together, which instils the population with a common sense of purpose in their search for common objectives and interests.

It is this common sense of purpose based on certain criteria which, though changing, are recognized as important by the community itself, that gives the community its identity, its desire to exist and to be considered as an entity. Under no circumstances must regional divisions be allowed to create barriers within such a community.

1.4. The only way to achieve a European dimension without losing sight of the human element is to build on the foundation of ethnic and regional communities. This implies that ultimately a two-fold process must take place: on the one hand, the creation of a supra-national political authority with its own European policy, and on the other the recognition of the autonomy of ethnic and regional communities.

1.5. The EFA rejects the Jacobin concept of a centralized and monolithic Europe. Our goal is a European fatherland, based on ethnic and regional communities which formally recognizes the rights of the small minorities that are unable to form federal states.

1.6. The building of Europe must therefore lead to the dismantling of existing nationstates, through a transfer of their powers to ethnic and regional communities on the one hand and to the European authority on the other. This shift of power must not be allowed to prejudice the social achievements of the least-favoured sectors of the population.

1.7. The EFA takes the view that Europe should not be limited to the European Community, which is merely the embryo of what Europe will eventually become. Cooperation between nations and peoples, governed according to the same democratic principles, is a starting point for the future construction of Europe.

1.8. European unity signifies a new opportunity and a new role for groupings and minorities which are now divided by national frontiers and are prevented thereby from fully realizing their individuality and cultural development.

1.9. Isolationism runs counter to our concept of federalism. EFA declares its solidarity with all peoples of Europe and the world, in particular those who suffer under foreign and dictatorial domination and those who are on the road towards full development. The EFA is therefore in favour of proper recognition of the fundamental rights of individuals and nations.

2. The European Free Alliance and Federalism

2.1. The essence of federalism is that decision-making should be as close as possible to those spheres of life where a person can best prove himself as an individual and in the group. Progress towards larger cooperative associations and administrative units and progress towards European unity must be achieved in a harmonious manner; true to federalist principles, for these have the greatest possible respect for diversity.

2.2. It is vitally important, in the view of the EFA, that policy at European level should concern itself only with problems that belong to that level, and not interfere in regional and local affairs which can best be dealt with at the regional and local level.

2.3. Viable communities constitute the smallest units of the European political edifice. In the Europe of the future the local authority will continue to be the true guardian of freedom and will safeguard the voice of the individual in the solution of local problems.

2.4. The next level in the political hierarchy is the ethnic community or region. It must have a democratic administration including its own assembly and an executive body accountable to this assembly. The autonomy of the ethnic and regional communities must extend to all the essential aspects of the life and development of communities. Agreements and disputes among the regions and between the regions and Europe as a whole must be settled through consultation and conciliation procedures. The regions must be geared as closely as possible to the needs of the cultural communities, for it is they that provide the richness of European diversity.

Ethnic and regional communities provide the new framework of European life. A network of free and flexible agreements must bind these communities to another.

2.5. At the top of the European political structure is the European authority, empowered to deal with all those problems which by their general or technical nature can only be solved in the broader European context. The EFA supports the two-chamber system. The First European Chamber would be composed of representatives directly elected by the European people according to a uniform and democratic electoral system. The Second European Chamber, with regional representation, would have to put ethnic and regional communities in a position to exert an influence on the construction and policies of Europe.

2.6. The EFA is fully aware that the federal construction of a democratic Europe of the people is a difficult and long-term undertaking. It is however the only alternative to the utopian idea that nation-states can progress towards a harmonious union by signing a few treaties. This ideal is one of the pillars on which the voluntary political cooperation and great solidarity of the members of the European Free Alliance is based.

3. The European Free Alliance and Culture

3.1. Interregional agencies must be set up in which European peoples and minorities related by language and culture can coordinate their educational and cultural policy without interference. The European Parliament must establish structures which put an end to the repression of minority cultures and offer all ethnic communities an opportunity for full cultural development.

3.2. The European institutions must recognize the importance of the in the Treaty of Rome non-recognized languages as a valuable heritage and means of communication. The European institutions must provide for regional languages to be used as the medium of communication with these regions.

3.3. The ethnic communities and regions must break the monopoly of official state culture in the field of literature, broadcasting and film. The regionalization of media policy should put an end to the superficial and deadening influence exerted by centralized communication media.

3.4. Education is clearly a community or regional responsibility. All education must be designed to equip the individual for self-determination and self-fulfillment in and with society. Interregional and preferably European cooperation is obviously necessary for the mutual recognition of diplomas, post-graduate qualifications and advanced technological research.

4. The Social Idea of the EFA

4.1. The member parties of the EFA stand for progressive social justice. This means the strive after a fair distribution of knowledge, ownership and power, as well as an appreciation of personal creativity, enterprise and intellectual freedom. Our concept of justice dictates that we apply radical principles of justice to all conflicts of interest in society. This is why we reject antiquated political ideas: egoistic liberalism, which leaves the poor and the weak oppressed, dogmatic collectivism which engulfs human creativity through bureaucracy and kills enterprise and paternalistic solidarity which, preaching solidarity, leaves injustice and privileges untouched.

In place of both new and inherited privileges and of the injustices perpetuated by our system of distribution in society, the EFA proposes an equitable distribution of income and wealth. Our first concern in this area must be for the under-privileged and less fortunate in our society.

4.2. In the present socio-economic situation, characterized by both high unemployment and rapid technological progress, the winning of the right to work, the humanisation of work, fresh emphasis on the importance of handicrafts and craft trades and the creation of a new attitude to work are challenges to which we must find a response. The redistribution of work and creation of new jobs are absolute priorities. The application of this principle should not be confined by reducing the number of working hours per day or per week, but must be viewed in the broader context of a new pattern of society.

4.3. The EFA wants priority to be given to the creation of jobs. Providing employment in the worker's locality is a key element of such a policy. Workers are not commodities which can be moved around arbitrarily: on the contrary, industry must move to areas where the necessary labour is available.

The Social and Regional Funds should both be used to achieve this aim. The EFA advocates the use of the Social Fund for regionalization. The conversion policy must derive its impetus primarily from the autonomy of the regions; it is logical therefore, that the Social Fund should support the regions in this effort.

4.4. In a consultive democracy agencies must be set up for cooperation and consultation between genuinely European social partners, the regions and the European authority.

4.5. In dealing with the unavoidable conflicts of interest, the needs of the community always take precedence over those of the individual or group. For the sake of solidarity, solutions to conflicts must be sought through consultation and cooperation, with special concern for weaker groups and non-organized interests.

4.6. The EFA upholds the principle of solidarity with the developing countries. The people of the Third World have to be helped in their struggle for independence and social justice. An equitable distribution of labour on global scale, as well as fair remuneration for labour and raw materials are preconditions for the securing of world peace.

4.7. The EFA believes in the value of pacifism and wishes to see the gradual dismantling and transformation of the arms industry and the military and transformation of the arms industry and the military machine. Mindful of the 'no more war' slogans of those who have fought at the front, it will campaign actively for total disarmament and the dismantling of military power blocs.

Nuclear arms are seen by the EFA as a threat to the existence of mankind and as such an absolute evil which must be resisted by all means.

5. The European Free Alliance and the Economy

5.1. The European federal authority has particular responsibility for helping less-favoured regions to achieve equality. The free movement of persons and goods and freedom of establishment have all too often been accompanied by irresponsible depopulation of deprived areas and excessive concentration of resources in industrial regions.

The highest priority must be the reorientation of European policy towards social and regional policy using the funds provided for this purpose. The EFA rejects the protectionism of the member States and the egoistic demands for 'fair returns' from community contributions.

5.2. Although the European Community's Institutions have clearly demonstrated their international value, they were conceived from a too one-sidedly economic philosophy according to which size and centralization are the only path to salvation. This has led to the pursuit of harmful agricultural policy geared to large scale monocrop production and the strengthening of the multinational food and feed undertakings, to increasing servitude to multinational companies rather than increased democratic and social control over them and to an all too docile attitude toward new economic lobbies, e.g. the nuclear holding companies that can only function when there is considerable concentration of financial resources.

In contrast to this belief in growth by means of largescale concentration, the EFA advocates a new life-style that attaches more importance to well-being and health than to production and technical progress not aimed at satisfying genuine welfare needs. The EFA therefore wants to ensure that the economy, living conditions and social intercourse preserve their vital links with man and nature.

This approach which is based on man and his natural and social environment, can only come to fruition in a responsible manner of economic activity is systematically accompanied by non-bureaucratic but transparent federally structured instruments. These instruments are the regional authorities, interregional consultative bodies, and international institutions, with the European Community occupying a position of great importance. The laws of the free market economy can this be corrected, as may be felt appropriate, through the variety of official instruments.

5.3. Curbing the power of the nation-state and strenghtening regionalization are the best ways of calling an effective halt to support for lame-duck companies whose products disrupt the free market economy and endanger the future of economically viable undertakings. A regional economic policy could both enhance market transparency and add weight to the European authorities' powers of intervention. The system of subsidies and facilities provided for setting up industrial companies must be brought to an end and used to strenghtening the regional authority.

The same authority could more effectively assume responsibility for equalizing the competitiveness of farms and promoting agriculture based on the family farm. Active promotion of regional balance is required using the European Agricultural Fund with assistance from the European Social Fund.

This regional authority would also be the ideal agent for stimulating small and mediumsized undertakings and enable them to overcome their handicap in relation to the big economic groupings.

5.4. The regional authority must be in a position to hold institutionalized consultation and to conclude agreements on economic and environmental problems which transcend the regional context and are shared by neighbouring regions.

Such consultation must lead to macro-economic cooperation.

5.5. In order to come to terms with the drastic changes taking place in the world, European economic policy must be geared primarily to programming in those sectors where only a European approach will work, e.g. steel, textiles, ship-building, and to joint infrastructure arrangements, i.e. for shipping and transport.

5.6. The European Parliament must be given power to call the Commission and Council to account, should the provisions of the Treaty concerning the free movement of goods not be respected.

5.7. The EFA wishes to see an expansion of the Treaty Law of the European Communities. The problems of multinational undertakings could be included by means of a code of conduct and a European legal statute. An environmental code should also be included to supplement Treaty law.

5.8. To reduce Europe's vulnerability in this area a policy of diversification of energy sources is required.

Research into the application of soft or alternative energy sources needs to be expedited. A strict European security programme is needed, covering both the siting and operation of nuclear plants and nuclear waste disposal. Moreover, the EFA advocates the implementation of a moratorium on nuclear energy.

5.9. The introduction of a European Monetary System, and eventually a European currency is a measure which will not only stimulate the economy but also contribute to greater social justice. The firm economic foundations which must support European monetary union will be possible only when the regions within Europe are in balance.

5.10. VAT rates and tax reduction arrangements must be harmonized and a European Monetary Union introduced before duties and quotas can finally be abolished.

6. The European Free Alliance and the World

6.1. The federal construction of Europe is an essential contribution to the problem of a world order.

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