

Redefining Europe?

Redefining what it stands for, or the way it implements its values, ideals, objectives? Or rather a question of taking up its inherent responsibilities in a better way?

Look at this “redefinition” through priority actions of BEL presidency:

- 1) **Economic governance:** here, in order to respond as it should to the depression generated by the crisis of late 2008, a fundamental shift in European economic governance is indeed required, has been acknowledged, and is being put into practice, via the Task force on economic governance. The aim = to strengthen the economic pillar of the EMU, to increase fiscal discipline, to broaden economic surveillance, to deepen coordination.

So here the EU has gradually, “par la force des choses”, redefined its role, by reasserting itself as a “manager” of a common economic policy: the Union is now recognized as the main protection shield against global and economic disruptions.

This redefinition (or recognition) is a difficult task, because member states with the very best practices are reluctant to see an open-ended “solidarity” to those states in which a lack of fiscal discipline has become apparent. Hence the importance of what Mr. Orban has said about a common monitoring of the national budgets.

It is also a long-term task, because it is part of the 2020-strategy.

Important stock-taking will take place this December GAC, aim: maintain the dynamism in structural reforms, because redefinition = be more precise in objectives, be better organized in monitoring progress, and inspire confidence, in a credible way.

Important recent improvement: dealing with how we finance the pension funds, nationally, and how do we take this into account when assessing fiscal discipline? How do we reward forward-looking policies, how do we sanction reckless spending?

Is this a redefinition? It is rather a reaffirmation and strengthening of the COMM as guardian of the Treaties: broadening its monitoring powers in the field of economic governance, as a matter of fairness towards those who practice good governance.

All this is very well and encouraging, though I personally see a risk of a new bureaucracy: from 2011 onward, member states will present their Stability and Convergence program together with their national structural reforms program, for EU “advice”

Is this the price to pay for the EU redefining its role as an important global actor in the world economy, more powerful yet at the same time more vulnerable? Is an increased regulation the price to pay for reinforcing the role of guardian of free trade and of fair and honest practices? We will have to avoid the trap of creating a new bureaucracy with loopholes.

At the same time, we have to be aware that taking care actively of employment is part and parcel of economic governance; it has always been a priority, and it is even more so today, with the rising unemployment, the ageing of the population, the increased social tension within the EU and outside.

Employment is an integral part of the 2020 strategy, yet one cannot create artificial employment, there are no resources for such a luxury. It illustrates how the EU has to deal with a qualitative change in the world economy: the money for non-productive employment (amongst others: the inefficient part of the civil services) is largely spent, yet resources for greening the economy and encouraging eco-business are scarce and results are slow to become apparent.

We are dealing with a delicate transition, in which the EU will need to take full responsibility, and will be held accountable. This is not a redefinition, rather a reminder of a basic social duty.

2) **Climate change and energy policy:** two sides of the same coin: redefine, or reassert? How much financial leeway do we have to stick out our neck further and help the developing world to meet new obligations: Cancun is encouraging.

A climate policy is obviously related to energy policy: you cannot influence decisively climate change if you are at the mercy of energy suppliers. Yes, this is big business with a lot of huge interests, but if the EU is serious about climate change it should be as serious about its common energy policy.

How do we redefine EU's role in promoting the green economy?

Where is ecobusiness?

What does EU do against "ecocide"? Limits to growth, population control: do these problems require definition, or merely (more) political courage? In my opinion, if the EU is not more forthcoming in consciousness- and action-raising, not about the end of the world, but about the limits to the planet's resources, who is going to do it? This is not a redefinition, this is a matter of re-emphasizing our moral global duty.

3) A European Union of Freedom, Liberty, Security

The main challenge in this vital policy field was (and is) managing the multitude of files and issues. The fight against lawlessness is permanent, never ending. The threats are globalized. The EU's role has already been redefined, from dealing with its own area of Freedom, Security and Justice, to inserting this area within the broader world stage of movements, of people or of goods, legally or illegally. The business of law-enforcing officers is, unfortunately, ever-increasing... The EU is building up a consensual analysis of the term "criminality", and a corresponding answer, like the mutual recognition of juridical decisions.

The main challenge is to be ahead, to prevent rather than cure.

The duty in this field is as difficult as it is basic, for the EU citizens will judge the EU as such on its performance in this field under the common denominator of "security".

4) External relations: EU as a global actor:

- EU and its immediate environment: **enlargement** = not merely a technical or political issue, also strategic: how do we promote and anchor the EU as our framework for peaceful and prosperous cooperation, without diluting it? Is the enlargement process being redefined?

- honest broker, conditionality: the basic attitude remains, is not redefined
- we are aware not only of the geo-strategic importance of future enlargement, we are constantly keeping in mind enlargement history: 5 enlargement moves so far have gradually transformed the initial Six into a dynamic Union of permanent consultation, partnership and solidarity. It is our common responsibility, not only to give a fair chance to candidates, but equally to maintain, protect and develop our “acquis communautaire”, especially in these times of global challenges.
- Enlargement is not a calendar-based process, it is a merit-based process, in which the candidates need to be helped to attain their goals. I do not, therefore, see an imminent redefinition in this area, rather the need to maintain a balance between conflicting pressures.

- **EU and its strategic partners**: are we waking up, are we redefining our approach in a productive way? Globalization is shaking up the balance of power. The powerhouse of the global economy is moving to Asia where our new export strategies need increased market access. Leverage as an individual state is becoming less and less relevant or efficient.

A substantial debate on our relations with the strategic partners (BRIC) has been launched: this is a promising process, if we keep up with it, sticking to the small steps approach, gradually building up unity of vision and action, rather than a grand new cooperation design which would remain a nice paper without life. The EU has to grasp this opportunity for redefining our relations in this field, from something we took for granted (“they need us as a trading partner”) to something we have to really work at, permanently and more intensely.

- Is a similar redefinition taking place on the foreign Policy front? **Can the EU rise to the global challenge?** Do we first need another debate on redefining our foreign policy? We realize that the EU's foreign policy has indeed been for too long about spending money and drafting paper declarations on everything and nothing. We now have the Lisbon Treaty to get reorganized. What do we do with it?

- the way we organize the new EEAS is important: mingling the existing services of Commission and Council, with the expertise of the member states, should lead to the member states having ownership, working with the service rather than besides it.
- We should not expect big revolutionary changes overnight. We will need years of patience and experience to arrive at a common evaluation and judgment and corresponding action. In this respect, we have work to do, and (re)define our Foreign Policy in function of our internal policies. And the Commission is key in this process. Examples:
We need a robust external energy policy.
We need a strong and coherent external policy on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.
Regarding our Single market, let us request more reciprocity on market access and make our engagements more conditional.
Regarding crisis management, our military and civilian capabilities need to be updated jointly, so as to profit from each other strengths and specialties, look for more economies of scale, and pool our capacities to increase our military credibility. In this respect, let me stress the essential task of redefining, in an operational way, the cooperation between EU and NATO, making it more rational, efficient and cost-saving.
- In conclusion: there is undoubtedly a rising awareness of the Union's huge, untapped potential to increase our leverage in Foreign policy. Yes it still lacks a solid bedrock, more assertiveness is required, as our leaders focus on economy and growth we should not reduce our foreign policy to mercantilism. We are at the beginning of a process, where all inputs of consensual and operational redefining of our goals are welcome. We do not need a grand vision, we need small irreversible steps.

- 5) **Budget:** (Barroso): use scarce resources wisely, but that's not a recipe for wait & see. Very interesting topic in the new power game: increased power of EP = redefinedd democratic rules

In this context; in redefining or reformulating or reaffirming our mission statement, we have to take into account the need to broaden the popular support for the EU, which at best is being taken for granted, at worst is blamed for all unpopular measures that the increasing globalization imposes upon us.

In (re)defining the budget, let us keep in mind the need to present to the citizens very concrete objectives or realizations: protection against rogue financial institutions, a clear and advantageous European brevet, well-thought-off job market regulations that give a chance to all, including the plus-50s, ... In other words, in defining the EU towards the citizens, we should always concentrate on concrete results in policy making, resulting in turn in effective EU legislation as an efficient answer to the inevitable globalization.

In his State of the Union 2010, the president of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has given some examples to redefine our budgetary coordination, that is, how to pool our means to back policy priorities, with direct effect on citizens' life:

- energy interconnections, research, development ais
- defense
- European infrastructure projects, like the very future-oriented Danube Strategy

- 6) **Institutionally:** a thankless job to redefine our working methods:
- we can only increase our efficiency if the new institutions work together: Commission, Parliament, Council, President of the Council, and HR. To consolidate these new institutions, and to make sure they work closely and smoothly together, is an inescapable, concrete task for any rotating council presidency, as also clearly stated by Mr. Orban.
 - European External Action Service: not a gadget, but a tool for presenting a common vision and, if necessary, common front.

7) **I return to my starting point.** Very much of the general debate today is more about what Europe can deliver, less on what it should be like. Every day, the EU is challenged to prove its relevance and its cost-effectiveness. For some, the cost factor even seems to have become an absolute issue that tends to disregard a proper benefit analysis. Visionary ideals about European integration that drove the founding fathers have to a large extent been replaced by a prevailing utilitarian view on the European Union. In saying this, I am aware that, especially in the newer member states, like Romania, the political importance of the EU in stabilizing the whole of Europe is regularly emphasized and is integral part of its policy towards the EU. The debate about enlargement is therefore, in my view, a core debate, because we try to find a balance between political vision, on the one hand, and economic and institutional sustainability, on the other.

I would like to conclude on this point of openness to the world. The EU cannot and will not be an island of protected prosperity, but will need to reassert itself in this merciless world where economy, climate, crime, justice and other basic aspects of daily life are transboundary. For such a productive assertion to happen, we need our European institutions as redefined by Lisbon to work together and have them proof their usefulness and productivity, pushed of course by politically courageous leaders, Euro parliamentarians, civil servants, and participants to conferences like the one today.

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