

Luxembourg, May 11th 20019

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Resolution – Euroscepticism

Foreign Affairs Commission

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**Growing inequalities and misinformation:** European Union citizens feel the effects of unemployment, increases in the cost of living and various other social inequalities. Additionally, the scepticism and distrust in the European Union have been on a steady rise since its peak in 2007. The trust in the Union has reached only 42% in the **Autumn 2018 Standard Eurobarometer Poll**. A rise in misinformation and anti-European sentiment on the internet, the political stage and media outlets have further influenced this trend.

The growing tendency of criticism towards the European Union or its integration often referred to as Euroscepticism, can range from a pursuit to reform certain institutions, to a complete opposition and rejection of the entire Institution, membership, and integration.

According to Article 2, point 2 of the **Treaty of Lisbon**, “The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.”

The European economic recession in 2009, followed by the migrant crisis in 2015 have increased anti-EU sentiment in the population. This has led to numerous anti-EU protests in Poland and elsewhere, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU and political parties in other Member States campaigning for their own exit. With the rise of anti-European movements in countries such as **Hungary** (Fidesz), **Italy** (Lega Nord) and **France** (Rassemblement National) citizens have been questioning the importance of the European Union.

In our resolution, we aim to introduce these problems and propose a solution to tackle them.

IC’s:

From the general claims circulating the Committee on Foreign Affairs is:

- A. Aware of the lack of common political knowledge about the functioning of the European Union, EU, and the work it does, due to its complicated nature, which increases Euroscepticism;
- B. Reaffirming that the **Principle of Subsidiarity** defined in Article 5 of the **Treaty on European Union, TEU**, ensures that there is a separation of the decision-making process between the EU level and the national, regional or local level;
- C. Concerned about the rise of fake news used to harm the EU. According to the **Eurobarometer survey**:
  - a. 85% of EU citizens think that fake news affects their country negatively;
  - b. 83% of EU citizens think that fake news has a negative effect on democracy;
- D. Noting with deep concern that some governments often blame the EU for national problems;

- E. Bearing in mind that the EU has competences to suspend the voting rights of Member States in case of serious breaches of the values stated in Article 2 of the TEU, as outlined in Article 7 of TEU;
- F. Alarmed by a democratic deficit in the EU and lack of transparency of EU institutions;
  - a. Taking note of only one elected institution in the EU, the European Parliament, EP, which must approval most legislation for the Union;
  - b.
  - c. Pointing out that the EC, proposed by the Council of the EU, based on suggestions made by the national governments and approved by the EP, is not sufficient legitimated. Recognising that the Council of Ministers, part of the bicameral EU legislator, is composed by different ministers from all the Member States, whom are either elected by the national citizens or nationally appointed;
  - d. Disturbed that European citizens perceive the EU as an undemocratic entity which infringes the rights of Member States' sovereignty;
- G. Deeply concerned with the lack of funding and personnel for the **European External Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex**, to help protect 66,000 km of coastline and 13,000 km of land borders:
  - a. As of 2016 the agency has a mere 402 staff members and receives less than 0.2% of the total EU budget;
  - b. Convinced that a weak external border is incompatible with the open-border policy of the Schengen Area;
- H. Bearing in mind that no common social policies exist in the EU; well aware of social differences between east-west and north-south. Social issues are growing in the Union;
  - a. Recognising that 10% of the total EU budget is spent by the European Social Fund, ESF, to reduce unemployment, social exclusion and promote economic growth;
  - b. Reaffirming that there are considerable economic inequalities: in the EU, the 10% wealthiest households hold 50% of the total wealth whereas the 10 % least wealthy hold a mere 3%;

OC's:

The Committee on Foreign Affairs:

1. Suggests that the EU encourages its citizens to inform themselves more about the functioning of the European institutions;
  - a. Advises citizens to visit the homepage of the EC and the EP to better understand the role of them;
  - b. Congratulates **Pulse of Europe** for initiatives which try to connect different nationalities and want to achieve a new awareness and consciousness by motivating people to join their events in different cities and share their positive energy for Europe. Their events are accessible through social media;
  - c. Further recommends that citizens should join events or workshops proposed by youth organisations such as the **JEL, Jeunesse Européenne du Luxembourg**, to become better informed about the EU. They can be found through social media;

- d. Instructs Member States to include more compulsory activities in schools relating to the EU.
    - e. Welcomes the idea of the **European Youth Forum** to increase the budget of the **Erasmus Programme**, which can positively affect and promote better education for young citizens of the EU;
  2. Approves of a Common European Broadcasting Service and believes that it could help prevent the spreading of fake news. Additionally, national populists should be confronted with the use of “positive populism”, using grass-roots campaigns on social media to challenge the misconceptions discussed about the EU;
    - a. Expresses its appreciation for **WhyEurope**, which is an independent non-profit, non-partisan organisation, founded in 2016. The organisation aims to highlight the benefits of the EU for the average citizen in their daily life and thereby combating the rise of Euroscepticism and populism;
    - b. Expresses its appreciation for a Common European Broadcasting Service, which for example, informs citizens about the work of the EU, why voting is important and encouraging them to vote;
    - c. Supports French President Macron’s idea for the creation of a European Agency for the Protection of Democracies, which stands to defend against the spread of fake news, cyber-attacks, and foreign nations colluding with or funding European political parties;
  3. Affirms that the EC enacts the Article 7 of TEU, to prevent the spread of populist, xenophobic, or authoritarian Member State governments as a preventative measure;
    - a. Regrets the inaction taken to implementing the Article 7 for the Polish and Hungarian governments with their recent rise to authoritarian regimes and disablement of the rule of law.
    - b. Endorses **Amnesty International’s** demand that the Article 7.1, the warning mechanism, should be implemented more frequently when dealing with Human Rights violations in Member States;
  4. Calls upon the EC to expand the role of citizens in the decision-making process of the various EU Institutions;
    - a. Notes that citizens can use the European Citizens’ Initiatives, ECI, to make and support proposals in the areas of the EC’s competences;
    - b. Strongly encourages the EC to consider thoroughly ECIs, which have reached one million signatures and requests that then a substantial vote should be held by the EP for each proposal;
    - c. Expresses its hope that citizens write petitions about concerns they have on EU policies;
    - d. Urges the EC and EP to consider public criticism and become more transparent with the legalities in their propositions and policies;
    - e. Reminds citizens that they can attend European Citizens’ Dialogues to discuss issues with representatives of the EC or commissioners;
  5. Emphasises the importance of Frontex, demanding an increase to its budget and an additional 10,000 guards within the next mandate;
  6. Asks the EC, the EP and the Council to expand the social agenda of the EU;

- a. Requests an expansion to the ESF to decrease the social inequalities between the members. Additionally, this could help create new jobs and improve social and economic development and cohesion;
  - b. Considers the introduction of a minimum wage, which would be appropriate to each member state;
7. Congratulates the EC for launching the **Europe 2020 Strategy** and **Europe 2030 Strategy**, which focuses on sustainable and inclusive growth, and includes socio-economic, environmental and educational targets;
- a. Strongly urging the Member States to uphold and reach the targets in the expected time frame.

We as the committee on foreign affairs are aware and conscious of the importance of the European Union. According to the **European Parliamentary Research Service** on the cost of the non-Europe between 2014-19, the potential expenses for the Member States would have reached up to 1.75 trillion euros per year without the membership benefits of the EU. Additionally, the reintroduction of borders in Europe would account for a loss of 100 billion euros over a period of ten years, without considering the costs of building and maintaining border controls and patrols.

The European Union is, however, a flawed institution, which needs to adjust continuously to operate for its citizens now and for future generations. Transparency and communication with its citizens need to become more accessible and available. The protection of democracy and safeguard against the rise of fake news are major challenges of this century, the EU can help tackle those issues if everyone works together. The social agenda needs to be at the forefront, thereby combating socio-economic inequalities in the Union. We as the committee on foreign affairs believe that the European Union has a solid base for the ever-expanding global interdependence and integration and for the coming challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.