

A New European Configuration

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2007 was a prodigal year in the EU. A new configuration was designed for the European project: an enlarged Europe which builds a stronger political organisation for a more effective development of its internal and external agendas.

The two next years will be decisive to implement this new configuration and new problems should be envisaged. But a page was turned. Now it is time to discuss the new possibilities open by this new configuration as well as the different ways to participate in the European process.

The borders of the enlarged Europe are being open exactly when the Charter of Fundamental Rights is adopted. The new Lisbon Treaty, after ratification, will provide it with a similar legal value and will deepen the democratic mechanisms, with a larger involvement of the national parliaments and a wider range of the themes requiring co-decision by the European Parliament.

The other important news concerns a more effective decision-making process, extending the vote by qualified majority and creating two new executive posts: president of the European Council and high representative for external policy and security. The purpose is to develop an EU external action with more consistency between its instruments and more coherence between Member states. This is something crucial to make Europe a central player of the emerging new global order, where the key issue will be to strengthen multilateralism in an increasingly multipolar world.

In 2007, we have also seen the EU taking relevant initiatives to influence the path of globalisation, which require the new Treaty to be consolidated:

- in face of climate change, a roadmap for a post-Kyoto protocol was adopted due to the European leadership;

- in face of the disturbances in the financial markets, new procedures of international regulation were fostered by the euro zone influence;

- in face of the increasing immigration flows, a European immigration policy was finally defined, which combines integration, attraction, combat to the illegal immigration and collaboration with the origin countries;

- in face of the bottlenecks to development as those we have in Africa, a new partnership based on a joint strategy was built;

- in face of the difficulties to achieve the Doha Round, the EU has negotiated trade agreements which encouraged the improvement of environmental and social standards;

- finally, the responsibility of Europe in face of open or potential conflict zones, such as Kosovo, Middle East, Darfur or Iran has become undeniable;

In the meantime, in the internal front, the challenges are unveiling their wider scope. The international competition is coming from various poles. The problems are not only of environment but also of energy, not only of employment but of population. How can we turn these problems also into opportunities?

This is the purpose of the new cycle of the Lisbon agenda, now in preparation, with a view to renovate the prospects for growth and jobs, stepping up the transition to a high knowledge-intensive and a low-carbon economy. The launch of the plan of energy technologies, of Galileo, of the flexicurity agreement or of the initiative of new skills for new jobs, express an ambition which should be strengthened in the national reform programmes underway in all Member states.

We just need to look at the mega polis which are emerging around us all over the world. In spite of its many internal problems, the EU is today giving the best example on how to combine the economic with the social and environmental development and how to pursue this ambition. But, we now understand this clearly, the EU cannot achieve and sustain this agenda in isolation. It is in the European interest that the international partners pursue a similar path. We need more internal, but also more external action to shape globalisation. This is the main “raison d’être” of the Lisbon Treaty.

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