

RESOLUTION “MULTI-LEVEL FEDERALISM AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION”

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The Union of European Federalists is firmly convinced that federalism understood as multi-level governance is a universal and guiding principle, which includes all political levels with tasks they can deliver best according to the conditions of subsidiarity.

The general advantages of multi-level governance compared to a centralized political system are well known:

- policy making is closer to the citizen while at the same time the possibility to set common rules where and when necessary;
- decentralisation of power (“checks and balances”);
- more identification with the political system, due to the fact that voters who are in opposition to the government at the upper level may support a governing party at lower levels;
- possibility to try out and to test new political solutions and concepts and as a result competition for the best solutions;
- chance for formation and recruiting of personnel with solid political and administrative experience at the lower levels;

Those advantages can be attributed to all political levels: the local, regional, national, European and world level.

The European Union provides the appropriate framework to solve important problems but has to become fully federal.

The EU is an important instrument for addressing important needs and challenges. It guarantees peace and democracy and serves the economic and social welfare of the citizen. Open borders and the common currency are among the outstanding achievements.

But there is a growing need for reforms in various aspects: Economic and Monetary Union is not completed, the options for action in the field of foreign and security policy are weak and the need for unanimous decisions in important fields prevent reforms. Moreover there is a need for a common asylum and immigration policy based on solidarity and a more effective common border management. The federal character of the EU has to be strengthened by a more efficient decision making with majority voting in all important fields – where appropriate with higher thresholds of three-quarters or four-fifths, including future reforms of the Treaties.

The contribution of the regions to European integration

Multi-level governance is an important feature of the European Union. Nation states alone do not have the power and the effectiveness to solve important political problems. Urgent political aims – like those of the Europe 2020 strategy (raising the employment rate, increasing combined public and private investment in R&D, climate change and energy targets, reducing school drop-out rates, increasing the share of the population having completed tertiary education, lifting at least 20 million

people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion) - can only be achieved if they are supported and implemented by all political levels – European, national, regional and local. And this is the reason why the regions have to play an important role in the EU.

Subnational entities have a growing influence in selected fields. Especially in bigger member states the European Union needs for many reasons strong regions:

- regions are close to the citizens and may contribute to a higher degree of acceptance in the European Union;
- regions have been the beneficiaries of the structural funds (1/3 of the European budget) since 1988 at least;
- in many cases regions are responsible for the implementation of EU-regulations;
- the involvement of regional experts in the EU decision making contributes to efficient solutions, they know best the conditions for functioning solutions at home;
- regions in many member states are responsible for culture and education. They may introduce a strong European dimension in the curricula of school and universities;

With the instruments of regional policy and territorial cohesion the EU has developed direct links to the regions. Thereby the administrative capacity of the regions has been strengthened even in centralized member states. The status of the regions including their right for self-government is accepted by the EU and the EU procedures offers a certain influence for the regions in the European decision making and to act at the European level. Regional and local representatives are members of the Committee of the Regions. Many regions have established liaison offices in Brussels.

The European Union needs strong and pro-European regions. From the citizen's perspective European integration and regionalization can be viewed as complementary processes: on the one hand power goes further away from the lower to the upper level on the other hand power comes closer to the citizens. Moreover regionalism is a method to solve problems and to minimize conflicts. From a regional perspective in a system of multi-level governance the predominance of the nation state has diminished and as a result regional conflicts may lose importance. Northern Ireland, Tyrol and the Basque region are meaningful examples for this. It may be possible that regional conflicts could be prevented or better managed if EU states internally were structured more federally.

European integration strengthens regions, but regionalism does not mean separatism. Regionalism in the European Union is positive. But regionalism does not mean that regions may claim to become independent nation states. It is neither the aim nor a promising concept to create a multitude of small new nation states and by doing so to increase the number of member states in the EU.

Separatism is not and cannot be the aim of regionalism in Europe. One of the predominant aims of European integration after WW II was - and still - is to frame the influence of independent nation states and to draw back the dangers of an exaggerated nationalism by creating a supranational Community based on democracy and the rule of law. In this regard, the UEF has no sympathy for unilateral attempts to enforce independence.

The Union of European Federalists emphasizes:

1. Federalism understood as multi-level governance is a universal and guiding principle for all political levels.

2. The European Union provides the appropriate framework to solve important problems, but has to become fully federal.
3. Regions and municipalities are important actors in order to cope efficiently with political tasks, therefore they have to play an active role in the European Union.
5. According to the concept of federalism, important tasks - such as peace-keeping, climate change, governing the global economy, nuclear disarmament, development cooperation, and humanitarian aid - should be addressed at the global level because of their global structure. Unfortunately the Instruments and procedures of the United Nations today are too weak to cope efficiently with those tasks, so that the EU has to balance the deficit as much as possible. In order to tackle universal problems in a better and more efficient way the structures of the United Nations have to be strengthened including, among other things, the reform of the Security Council and the establishment of a Parliamentary Assembly.