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## **Which blueprint for a post-national European Federation?**

Interim normative rules for a European Political Union

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Dedicated to those who elect  
a dynamic,  
a pluralistic,  
democratic and federal Europe

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# Which blueprint for a post-national European Federation?

Interim normative rules for a European Political Union

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## **Summary**

The proposed blueprint for a post-national European Union brings four complementary lines of thought together. Actually a wide array of arguments/assumptions lead to a scenario for a post-national project starting with an Analysis of the current situation and further develops Basic assumptions of a new European polity, Preconditions to a federal Europe and concludes with Practical steps towards a European federation (applicable to a vanguard group of member-countries in the Eurozone).

# Which blueprint for a post-national European Federation?

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## A clarifying exercise

From a European federalist perspective this paper tries to develop a blueprint for a post-national European federation. The author is aware of the limitations of this exercise.

The need to innovate shall not stop due to a paralysing discomfort about the value of personal suggestions. Innovation implies adaptation of reflection and action to current and future challenges.

A certain amount of determinism is shown in this paper. The underlying idea is: if European integration is being addressed to properly now, its future will be safe.

The debate on the future of Europe will have to take place. The content of this ambition will be made clear, preferably by as many people as possible, even if their assumptions strongly differ.

'In Europe abstract European ideals shall be better connected to real life,' says F. Timmermans. (European Voice - 16/05/2013). Therefore the assumptions of a European federal project shall become public knowledge. The unprepared citizen will be assisted in order to help him to understand these assumptions.

A number of academic quotes are tributary to 'Europese Gedachten' (European Ideas), 248 p., (ed) Erik De Bom, Pelckmans/Klement, 2014. This book offers innovative academic opinions regarding European integration. These opinions are important since these academics bridge the gulf between the causes of various deficits and federalism, calling federalism the most likely solution to these deficits.

## Which blueprint for a European Political Union?

*'Stop pessimism, take initiative'*  
*prof. em. Louis Baeck KU Leuven*

Following clusters of thought will be developed:

- Assumptions:

- A1 ***Current situation in the European Union***
- A2 ***Assumptions for a new European polity***

- Implementation:

- I1 ***Preconditions to a federal Europe***
- I2 ***Practical steps towards a European Federation***
- 

These four complementary approaches offer an overview of the conditions to a reasoned vision for a new polity in Europe. The arguments deal with **one set of policy options** and try to formulate the end-goal of a federal and post-national polity.

Objectives, working principles, values and institutions will ultimately converge in one single societal and political project. The strategy able to promote or achieve that new polity is hardly elaborated on now. Numbers 53 and 54 in the same Series do.

### **Current situation in the European Union (A1)**

*'Taking initiative opens up many unexpected opportunities, also in the West'*  
prof. em. Louis Baeck, KU Leuven (2011)

*'For many decades ailing economic government raised questions about efficiency of the polity'*  
Thomas Clay (in Le Monde about France)

#### **Negative factors influencing the EU:**

- **Personal input.** 'In their book Abundance Peter Diamandis and Steven Kotler opine that people are predetermined to behave as local optimists and as global pessimists. We underestimate the opportunities to exert influence on society. Hence we do nothing or too little', says Françoise Chombar. (De Tijd - 21/08/2014)

- **Unstable context.** The EU faces instability, disrupture and unrest. This is reflected in economic, financial and political crises, a crisis at the borders of the EU (with a latent thread of war) and increasing migratory pressure, complexity of government, as well as economic, financial and technologic cycles getting more hectic.

- **Three illusions.** European intergovernmentalism upholds three illusions: (1) the illusion of unicity of decision; (2) the illusion of improved growth/employment/prosperity/equity/solidarity in Europe without any change to its method of government (see Strategy and Agenda of Lisbon); (3) the illusion of the absence of urgency.

- **In its own right.** The European Union shall no longer be an extension of national interests. Influential European member-countries shall no longer impose socio-economic conditions that suit them best.

- **Too little, too late.** A monetary and economic union, coordinated by a political union, is needed in order to progress towards a supranational/federal method of government. Hybrid forms of confederalism/federalism maintain a deficient situation.

- **Doubtful progress.** Intergovernmentalism generates limited and vague procedures the member-countries can change or weaken at will and which implementation lacks democratic and judicial control.

- **Inhibited progress.** 'New political majorities created after 2014 elections shall improve the situation and not just perpetuate the past in a slightly changed manner', says Louis Verbeke, president of Vlerick Business School. (De Tijd - 2/09/2014)

- **Indirect mandate.** Different 'deficits' result from the attitude of many European leaders, who claim they can speak on behalf of their people, though not being directly mandated. 'If EU-reforms learn us something, national governments invariably elect to safeguard their own institutional relevance.' (De Bom, 135)

- **Guesswork.** People's irrationality leads to a negative understanding of real needs and solutions, thereby feeding populism and an obstinate anti-Europe attitude.

- **Taboos.** Many taboos have to be overcome before a new method of government can be introduced in the European Union. Adhesion by the political, administrative and intellectual elites to the new polity will require much power of persuasion.

- **Relation people versus politicians.** The balance of power between people and politicians is upset. Lost mutual trust, difficult communication and lack of a long term perspective and/or direction of policy by political parties and European policymakers are features of this relation.

- **Polarizing issues.** 'European Parliament now assumes responsibilities in issues that cause polarization (at national level), viz. fiscal and economic issues, asylum and migration.' (De Bom, 144) This is symptomatic of the weakening of national representative democracies'.

- **Paradox in politics.** People only trust tangible results. Change isn't visible right away after being decided. Populists pretend so. That is deception.

- **Opposition to change.** People as well as politicians (at least those who seek re-election) are opposed to change, let be deep restructuring. They prefer a standstill, even at a high price.

- **Enhanced cooperation.** The method of enhanced (political) cooperation meets with following objections: (1) each time it was applied intergovernmental cooperation was the outcome (without democratic or judicial control), and (2) the interest in this method was marginal since not being used for or able to achieve important reforms.

- **Inadequate action.** The European Commission conveys macro-economic recommendations to national governments. This approach however lacks supportive European action and democratic legitimation and therefore remains often inoperative.

- **Inadequate means.** Limited European public spending or bad allocation of means possibly disrupts the route towards enhanced European competitiveness. A tight European budget is not necessarily proof of good governance.

- **Recent experience.** Recent experience would suggest new institutional procedures can be introduced by mere parliamentary pressure. Small adjustments (possibly with great symbolic value) will never generate a new post-national order in Europe.

## **Assumptions for a new European polity (A2)**

*Innovate to survive*

*'The only true integration is political integration, not a bureaucratic one'*  
*prof. Paul De Grauwe, LSE and em. KU Leuven*

*'Democratic legitimation of the EU cannot be assessed by national standards'*  
*(De Bom, 20)*

### ***Basic assumptions***

- **Basic issues.** The European Union is not just dealing with technical issues, market integration or free trade. The Union goes over core issues and content, among which the implementation of values and standards.

- **Peoples and legitimation.** Peoples of Europe are the ultimate source of political legitimation of the polity that governs them at European level. At each election the legislative and executive power are replaced according to the will of people, expressing themselves on the achievements of past government. Legitimation and accountability are related.

- **Why a political union?** European integration implies important political debate and priority setting. These decisions require the highest possible degree of legitimation and the implementation of ambitious goals in order to meet the growing challenges to Europe. The European Union is in urgent need of a political union.

- **Break with the past.** A new method of government in the European Union or at least in the eurozone will require a post-national and federal order.

- **European interest.** Considerable societal impact of European integration prompts a deep reform of the European intergovernmental method of government. At European level a new general interest emerges dispelling the justification of a Union of nation-states or of a Federation of nation-states.

- **Legitimation by people.** 'A redistributive government shall be legitimised by people

who bear the consequences of that action. Current democratic control within the EU is inadequate to link this action to the preferences of people. That link is too indirect. It is wrong to have these decisions taken by shielded off technocrats (and politicians)', say Van Hecke, Geenens and Rummens (VGR) (De Bom, 138)

- **ECB is no ministry of finance or economy.** In the absence of political initiatives towards joint (coordinated) economic and monetary action, European leaders tend to endow the European Central Bank (ECB) with additional functions that do not belong to the core business of a central banker. A political back-up for the monetary and economic Union shall be elaborated now.

- **More public support.** Correct arguments shall justify more Europe. No opinion is convincing without a political or socio-economic justification. A public debate will provide public and political support to a vision or a societal project.

### ***Preconditions towards a new method of government***

- **Compelling alternative.** If the intergovernmental method fails in so many instances an alternative shall be looked for.

- **Mission-statement of the EU.** 'In 1951 the founding fathers of Europe aimed at economic cooperation that would make war impossible.' (De Bom, 24) Now the 'open borders project' opens new prospects, but creates growing complexity. An updated mission-statement, end-goal and a competence-sharing-treaty will be elaborated in order to redefine the aim of the European Union or of the eurozone.

- **Purpose of the European Union.** To Jürgen Habermas the European tier represents: 'an instrument to increased prosperity, that in the future will be a community able to solve the challenges of globalisation.' (De Bom, 24)

- **Purpose of a new method of government.** The aim is to deal efficiently with greater complexity, basic issues, far-reaching decisions, long term objectives, increased demand for a legitimisation. A new method of government, in a dynamic democracy, shall meet these conditions.

- **Which other features?** A European system of government will develop new operational principles able to operate efficiently and purposely in a multi-level governance environment. The trias politica governs the system. Centrifugal and centripetal effects will balance each other. Complementarity, coherence and convergence shall become political principles. Top-down steering is complemented by a fair amount of bottom-up input. This concept goes about power-sharing. The new government will also cope with a 'trend towards scale-reduction and simplification', when and where needed. (B. Sturtewagen - De Standaard)

- **Cooperation among policy levels.** The new polity for Europe will optimize mutual cooperation among the different (multi-level) tiers of action without undermining the autonomy of the different tiers. This cooperation will be both vertical and horizontal. This joint societal and political project includes: legal order, structured deliberation, good governance, distributive equity, shared responsibility, complementarity and loyalty.
- **Small steps.** Small steps towards more Europe are as such not wrong. Inadequate is a small-steps-track without a masterplan, time-schedule or long term objectives.
- **Inspiring project.** No public mobilisation can occur in the political parties or in society without a European project. A project that focusses primarily on institutions instead of on objectives and values, remains a sterile project. In this context a redistributive solidary action by Europe is important because it brings a fairer and a social Europe closer. A limited social Europe is already in place, but is incomplete and is hardly visible. People are foremost interested in a project that is attentive to socio-economic issues and individual interest. Ideology and abstraction repulse people.
- **Continuation and acceleration.** Europe has little time left to redress its failing government, dwindling influence and reduced competitiveness. Delay is no option.
- **Clear vision.** People are entitled to a clear and coherent vision of the future of Europe.
- **More is less.** More Europe can mean less taxation as a consequence of European coordination and pooling of outlays, hereby shunning overlapping public spending.

### **Preconditions to a federal Europe (11)**

‘Democracy is not in need of unity or integration, rather of diversity and plurality’  
(De Bom, 30)

‘Visibility is crucial since it adds to the problem-solving capacity of democratic decision-making’  
(De Bom, 31)

- **Positive arguments.** Negative arguments are sometimes used to praise a federal method of government (e.g. cost of the absence of a European federation). Positive arguments deal with people’s socio-economic expectations. The latter arguments are accepted by people. Clear arguments go beyond non-committal statements.
- **Shared convictions.** People and administrators of Europe accept their future is related to following ideas: no dynamic society and democratic polity without a European federation, no fair Europe without socio-economic solidarity and no effective Europe without federalism.

- **Hierarchy of laws and standards.** European rules and legislation have precedence over national/regional rules. This is the so-called hierarchy of laws and standards. This hierarchy will be incorporated in the European fundamental law. Disputes on this subject will be ruled by the European Court of Justice.

- **Integrative framework.** 'An institutional integrative framework will be established, opposed to an institutional centralist framework. (The Federalist Debate - Elisabeth Alber - July 2014 - p.30-31)

- **Joint project.** National governments and political parties electing more Europe (in the eurozone) should publicly stand up for a joint political and societal project.

- **Stereotypes.** Besides ideological stereotypes political parties do not venture in the formulation of a European project. Do these stereotypes still match European challenges? The left-right divide shall have to be enlarged by a new content including the multi-level European government order.

- **Constitutional project.** 'Inadequate democratic legitimation in the European Union can be mended as soon as the Union becomes a jointly supported constitutional project. Both political identity and community-building are at stake. The community of European people shall become visible to themselves as a political community. Provided the European institutions open up the perspective where individuals can see themselves situated and involved in a European wide sphere of power and where they will recognize themselves as European citizens.' (VGR) (De Bom, 141)

- **Post-national system.** 'According to Habermas' conception of the EU as a post-national system, people can identify themselves with political standards and values. Constitutional patriotism becomes an objective. This is the only road towards building a European identity, says Habermas.' (VGR) (De Bom,18)

- **No nationalistic identity building.** 'Political identity can be built, without returning to a national, regional or community identity. Participation of people in a democratic project can lead to feelings of solidarity with that project, without reverting to shared cultural identification' (as a false precondition to a democratic process). (VGR) (De Bom, 141)

- **European public sphere.** The loss of confidence of people in national and European political institutions is serious, but can be solved as follows: 'A true European society can be realized if people feel their (political) fate is closely tied to that of their fellow citizens.' (...) 'A European public sphere opens up when people can enter into a discussion about the future of a joint European project. At European elections political parties participate in a European electoral competition where the choice between different policy options can be decided. As such a European joint identity will be created enabling the establishment of a European public sphere.' (VGR) (De Bom, 134)

- **Survive or not.** 'If together we don't elect integration, the risk of disintegration and ensuing social decline will be the price. Europe shall further invest in infrastructure, future economic growth and at the same time accelerate integration. This is needed in

order to make Europe survive as an economic and political community,' says Vincent Juvijns, JP Morgan's Global Market strategist. (De Tijd - 27/09/2014)

## **Practical steps towards a European Federation (12)**

'Feasibility depends too much on determination to progress' (De Bom)

'The sequence of priorities changed considerably' (De Bom)

These steps can be identified in five different options:

- *Which two-speed integration?*
- *Which federalism?*
- *Which good governance?*
- *Which social dimension?*
- *Which other preconditions?*

### ***Which two-speed development?***

- **Conflicting goals.** A number of Member States objects in principle to any further transfer of sovereignty. For member-countries, open to more Europa, a new concept shall be developed enabling them, in one step or stepwise, to implement a new method of government where above principles can converge (see above preconditions to a federal Europe). The paralysing conflict of objectives in the European Union shall be resolved by a two-speed or differentiated integration.

- **Differentiated integration.** The Eurozone can be the first group of Member States to further integrate. Whether the Member States of the Eurozone will reap the advantages of more Europe, is not yet clear to these States. However economic stagnation in the Eurozone can easily be explained by lack of convergence, absence of a full-fledged Economic and Monetary Union and of a political union.

- **Consequences of differentiation.** What does the rest-group want or what does it lose? The *acquis communautaire*, limited coordination concerning external action, migration, asylum and home affairs will further apply. The development of that *acquis* involves all members of the European Union. The vanguard group of the eurozone can go its own way. Opponents to more integration cannot stop them.

- **Initial resistance.** Hesitation is deep-rooted in the Eurozone. Not harming relations with the restgroup is a challenge to the Eurozone. A clear *modus operandi* between both groups of Member States will create mutual trust and readiness to cooperate. The 'first choice' principle, with regard to internal market matters, or legal packs open to the rest-group, can help dissipate mistrust. The rest-group or individual Member States cannot change neither veto these proposals, but can adhere to them if falling within the

internal market package. This provision shouldn't cripple in advance each legal initiative of the Eurozone for sake of keeping the rest-group on board.

### ***Which federalism?***

- **Federalism misunderstood.** Federalism, and by extension European federalism, meets serious opposition due to: (1) lack of experience with federalism, except in a few Member States; (2) rejection of the so-called centralism and the taboo of the European superstate; (3) stronger European institutions meet with suspicion by people; (4) can European federalism deal with current challenges?

- **A modern Political Union.** In the book 'The dynamics of the EU integration and the impact on national constitutional law' by Paola Blancia (2012) two important opinions are expressed: (1) 'What can be the instrument allowing to manage the complex relationship among the multiple stakeholders acting both at national and at supranational level in all these policies and issues? To solve the problem, the author suggests to adopt a multi-level constitutionalist approach, which allows us to view the European Union as a tiered community; (2) the consolidation of interconnected levels of power, of shared competences and of judicial procedures, could represent the first step in the transition from the current EU to a modern political union. The evolution of the European Union towards a multi-dimensional and federal order could oblige the Member States to accept a shift towards the creation of federal institutions with supranational competences.' (The Federalist Debate - Claudio Mandrino - July 2013 - p. 59)

- **Which federalism? (1)** According to Elisabeth Alber 'federalism is a pragmatic and adaptable tool that facilitates the achievement of good governance, but only if conceived as a set of interlocking spheres in continuous transformation, each with its own structures, procedures and policies.' 'This federalism is concerned about structures (institutional innovation) and with regard to (re)new(ed) forms of decision-making processes (participatory democracy).' (The Federalist Debate - July 2014 - p.30)

- **Which federalism (2).** The ultimate aim of federalism, as a method of government, is to foster not only territorial but also social and individual autonomy.' (The Federalist Debate - Elisabeth Alber - July 2014 - p.30-31)

- **Federal method of government.** A new method of government of the European Union tunes all tiers to each another. European government will replace governance. Politisation of decision-making at European level will have to take place. Legitimation of European decision-making goes through two equivalent legislative bodies. People get interested in European decision-making by a system of visible opinions, debate and ultimate decisions. It actually operates 'through the systematic adoption of a process- and policy-oriented federalism'. (The federalist Debate - Elisabeth Alber - July 2014 - p. 32)

- **Applicable principles.** Each method of government is vested on principles and assumptions. In the case of federalism these are: unity, autonomy, subsidiarity, complementarity, coherence and diversity. Other principles are: proportionality,

sustainability, precaution, non-discrimination and fundamental rights. Following values should also be considered: participation of people, solidarity and social equity. What about loyalty, efficiency and good governance?

- **Reach and depth.** What is the reach and depth of each of these values and principles? 'Principles show a great extent of vagueness and values are weakly defined' (De Borm), rendering their implementation difficult. The European project shall create more obviousness.

- **Meaningful polity.** The implementation of the 'right' principles doesn't warrant the expected outcome. Foremost an adequate method of government shall be chosen. Efficiency, decisiveness and effectivity will be created by an open, flexible and purposive method of government. 'When assessing what efficiency means, the question will be: efficiency why? Based on which criteria? Criteria are not neutral. They refer to political, ethical and ideologic choices.' (De Standaard - M. Reynebeau - 10/09/2014)

- **Constitutional regions.** The exclusive relation between the member-countries and Europe, with possibly limited access of constitutional regions to European decision-making, constitutes an obstacle to a balanced development in the European Union. A correct relation implies that constitutional regions can act when and where they are competent. European Fundamental Law will cover this issue.

- **Flexibility.** The new European polity will display flexibility enabling continuous adaptation and reinvention. 'The rules of the game have to be kept flexible but not loose', says E. Alber (The Federalist Debate - July 2014 - p. 33).

- **Federal Eurozone.** The operational tools needed by the Eurozone are: (1) own societal and political objectives; (2) own equivalent legislative bodies (the European Parliament and a Senate); (3) own executive power (government); (4) own resources and budget; (5) own Accounts Office and Court of Justice; (6) own fundamental law/constitution; (7) a coexistence pact with the rest-group of member-countries not participating in the Eurozone; (8) own External Action, for all related to the euro.

**Eurocrisis.** 'Either strong member-countries will make concessions to the weaker ones in exchange of a joint economic and monetary Union. Or we return to a zone of about six core countries that are willing to elaborate that approach'. (prof. em. Louis Baeck, KU Leuven - Netto - dec 2012) Leaving the Eurozone will be a costly decision to those who would consider it. This would not be profitable to the Eurozone either.

- **Which intermediary steps?** One group of federalists backs the amended European treaties proposed by the Spinelli-group. Question is whether this intermediary step leaves the road open or impedes further progress towards a 'final' fundamental law? The other approach supports the introduction of a (final) fundamental law to be implemented in one step or in various consecutive steps in order to reach that final goal.

- **Success or failure?** Federalism is not easy to be implemented properly. The chance

of failure is considerable if not all key-factors of success are present. These factors are: a consensus on the federal method of government, loyal application by the stakeholders of all principles of federalism, all stakeholders participate in the system.

### ***Which good governance?***

- **Good governance (1).** People prefer not having to face various tiers of government which are being perceived as an accumulation of competing authorities that show an exaggerated mania for organisation within vaguely delimited competences. Good governance can be demonstrated by an accessible, transparent and clear organisational scheme of the administration, featuring an easy rather than an obtrusive service. Simplicity and visibility are the road towards effectivity, vicinity and acceptance.

- **Good governance (2).** 'People and administrations should have the right to challenge public services in order to question, improve or reinvent them', says Elke Wambacq. (De Tijd - October 10, 2014) Joint windows of service to people can improve public service. Merging or sharing similar services can be profitable (shared services). Contractual or structural cooperation in the largest possible number of areas over the various tiers of government can be an objective. For some assignments smaller units of administration can be advisable. 'Fragmentation of closely related competences over different administrations or tiers shall be resisted because each of them will follow its own course generating mutually undoing measures', says Pieter Timmermans, CEO of VBO (De Tijd - 20/08/2014)

- **Good governance (3).** How can present institutions be reformed? For people the number of tiers should be reduced (e.g. for building permits or spatial planning). Each simplification of the administration raises the question about the basic assignments of the administration of that tier. Merging services cannot be an aim in itself, tracing win-win situations is.

#### **- Good governance**

**e (4).** Policy preparation, control and ruling shall periodically be checked up for its social relevance. Legislation can, after a given period of time, be revoked or adjusted. Disconnected governance falling short of a stable policy and of a long term perspective has led to present crises.

- **Good governance (5).** 'Structural reform is needed to safeguard the effectiveness of public administration. Any reference to ideology will be avoided, instead public administration and economics shall be restored to a healthy state', states Herman Daems, President of KU Leuven. (De Tijd - 19/09/2014)

### ***Which social dimension?***

- **Which active social dimension? (1)** 'An active welfare state will have to better redistribute in order to avoid prosperity ruptures.' 'What do Member States (in the EU or

the Eurozone) owe to each other or what are they entitled to ask from each other? Social ruptures erode the legitimacy of European society'. (De Bom, 31)

- **Consensus.** According to prof. Frank Vandenbroucke (KU Leuven) development of a European social union depends on a consensus on the social dimension. Meaning a search for joint standards and objectives that still allow for differentiated social (national) action. Therefore a clear understanding of the concept of solidarity shall have to be worked out at European level and inside the separate Member States.' (De Bom, 31)

- **Which active social dimension? (2)** Frank Vandenbroucke (KU) militates for a better definition of a social Europe, in order to prevent Member States to reduce their financial support to vital sectors, such as education and research. Vandenbroucke suggests a visible hand in wage policy. (De Tijd - K. Van Haver - 17/09/2014)

- **Which active social dimension? (3)** This social dimension shall go beyond ideology. Integration of economic, environmental and social policy shall be considerably improved. This integration shall become a priority. Better interaction is conditional to increased effectivity of the EU. An active social dimension is a conscious choice that implies adequate means.

### ***Which other conditions?***

- **Strengthening of European democracy?** Sylvie Goulard and Mario Monti state in their book 'Democracy in Europe' (2012): (1) 'it is wrong to think that the problem of European democracy can be solved by strengthening national democracy, because this does not legitimate decision-making at the places (tiers) where it is made; (2) Europe has to be rebuilt as a federal (and democratic) order. That means a transfer of sovereignty starting with the macro-economic and financial sector and going ahead with foreign action, security and defense (as well as energy and home affairs).' (The federalist Debate - S. Pistone - July 2013 - p.56)

- **Externalising politization.** 'A bigger role played by the European Parliament and more competences for the European Union can probably lead to more politisation. That will bring political order not closer to people. Current politisation is in the first place a form of internal politisation, a competition between political parties and institutions, far away from the different national public spheres. European elections can externalise politisation, reaching out to people and mass media, as in each democratic process and is made possible by a number of limited institutional reforms.' (VGR) (De Bom, 144). Some reforms will require a treaty change anyway. Limited institutional reforms will never generate the deep reform needed to initiate a post-national method of government.

- **Transnational public sphere.** 'Dynamism of political parties, with staged competition between majority versus opposition, is the only road to real democratisation in the European Union. These dynamics create political visibility which is needed for two

reasons: it increases the quality of democratic decision-making and creates a sense of communality among peoples of Europe. This politisation is no remote perspective. A limited number of institutional reforms can initiate the creation of a transnational European public sphere. (VGR) (De Bom, 134)

- **Visible joint decision-making.** 'Politisation is the place where issues and the very moments of joint decision-making are intentionally made visible to all people. Power is exerted in a known public institution, viz. the European Parliament, because winning seats depends on electoral competition. The public debate will no longer be a dull and decentralised process, but gets structured around a limited number of issues, a limited number of players and a context. Provided political players have an electoral interest to elaborate alternatives, the dynamics of power of public decision-making will become transparent and visible.' (VGR) (De Bom, 140)

- **A new agenda for Europe.** 'Time has come for a new agenda for Europe. This agenda will be supported by some strategic proposals that demand a new operational agenda for all European actors.' (...) 'Europe must know how to integrate in a positive way its citizens. The difference will be in the exercise of the capacity of individual participation as the central contribution to the reinvention of a jointly supported society', says F-J Quesado, G-M of the Innovation and Knowledge Society of Portugal. (New Europe - 31/08 and 7/09/2014)

- **Direct link.** 'Reinstate a direct link between elections and action, by the introduction of a European constituency or by the appointment of the president of the European Commission according to the elections' outcome. This can raise pressure on the leaders of the majority in European Parliament to justify political action.' (VGR) (De Bom, 145) This direct link can also be used to legitimate a Constitutional Convention or a European Constituent Assembly.

- **Electoral competition.** At European level more attention should go to electoral competition between those who seek assuming European topjobs, whereby a genuine European opposition is created that challenges those in power in order to develop policy alternatives of government. Such an institutionalised competition is needed in order to give people insight in which choices are being made and which alternatives of government are at hand.' (VGR) (De Bom, 139)

- **Autonomy and complementarity.** Complementarity of all tiers of government will change the justification of local public services. A distinction shall be made between internal and external aspects. Internal autonomy remains intact for these competences that are best exercised at that level or horizontally (subsidiarity). Externally, towards people, communality should aim at transparency, service and vicinity. Bridging that difference requires an attitude that emphasizes customer-friendly services.

- **Codes of conduct.** The use of codes of conduct can foster proper attitudes at each level of government. These codes shall seek to be mutually coherent. They shall become part of government action and be made compulsory.

- **Limited bottom-up communication.** 'Consultative bodies or participatory moments are insufficient. Representation cannot be reduced to a process of delegation or be understood as efficient bottom-up communication of policy preferences. (VGR) (De Bom, 134)

- **Long term vision.** Only the European Commission is able to develop a long term vision and implement it, since having the oversight and the means. Now the European Commission limits itself to a medium term vision/objectives/planning.

- **External action.** 'The world is operating at quite a different scale' (than at the national level), says prof. Hendrik Vos, UGhent. Speaking with one voice yields more impact or power. External Action shall monitor, whenever needed, the implementation of internal policy in international affairs.

- **Parallelism.** 'Reforms in the Member States shall stay in line with reforms at European level', says T. Timmermans (European Voice - 16/05/2013) This convergence is needed in order to facilitate close cooperation between all tiers.

### **Important political choices**

- **Reinforced European democracy.** Both national and European democracy will be strengthened. Both tiers will be on equal terms, each being able to deal with its own competences. Cooperation and synergy will be improved in a way that is only possible in a federal method of government.

- **A single reform.** The so-called problem-solving procedures and legislation (in a fractured number of domains) no longer suffice. A single deep reform shall eliminate all democratic, legitimation and operational deficits.

- **Differentiated development.** Differentiated development is a vital survival strategy to the EU. Economic growth in the Eurozone will benefit all EU-countries.

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- **A giant leap forward?** Implementation of reform of institutions/procedures can either proceed by one 'over-ambitious' step forward or in different steps in the pursuit of the same end-goal. The moment to decide and act is now.

- **Constitutional project.** A fundamental law will bring stability and flexibility to the European federation. It will be formulated starting from a blank sheet and will incorporate all features of the federal method of government, which is considered the best polity for the Eurozone. Amended treaties continue to suffer from too many flaws.

- **Active persuasion.** A campaign of active persuasion shall be launched in order to propagate federalism and have it accepted as a solution to transnational and supranational European integration. How to proceed? First by mobilizing influential people that can help neutralising the intergovernmental method of government. Second

by deep study of federalism and by proposing a relevant scenario for the eurozone. Third a broad information and lobbying campaign in order to persuade target audiences. Federalists will be trained in order to carry out these objectives.

### **A few European federalist themes**

European federalists shall take the lead in order to spell out a new method of government for Europe. No one else will do instead

Technocratic integration cannot replace political integration

European institutions are not functioning in an optimal manner since abiding intergovernmental assumptions

Joint strategic decisions cannot be taken by coordination instruments\*

The method of enhanced cooperation is too weak to achieve structural reform  
The intergovernmental method of government is ineffective, and cannot durably be amended

The intergovernmental model lacks the instruments to address unemployment and competitiveness

European Treaties offer too little room of manoeuvre for a real turning point to the eurozone\*

A democratic and effective Europe shall be established in order to handle important and urgent issues

If European integration is addressed properly now, future will be safe

A European federation is often qualified as too ambitious. Can this method of government still be eluded? Will a smaller number of Member States join in?

No political reform is credible without encompassing the European tier as a whole

A European federalist method of government is vital to progress

In the next five years the process of transforming the monetary union into a true political union must reach completion\*

Four unions will be at the base of an effective European government and decision-making in the Eurozone: a banking union, a fiscal union, an economic and monetary union and a political union

Effective European government is but possible in legitimised institutions.  
European federalism makes good governance possible

The birth of the United States of Europe can start by establishing guidelines  
and setting some deadlines for the political cycle that has just begun\*

Launching the implementation of fiscal federalism in the Eurozone is the  
prerequisite towards an effective supranational development plan\*

In order to become a turning point the launch of a supranational solidarity  
mechanism in the Eurozone shall be combined with effective support in terms  
of either a common social welfare system, or joint investment and  
development projects financed by European own resources\*

Further surrendering of national sovereignty will only be possible if the  
relinquished sovereignty is recovered at European level, not just  
as institutionalised rules, but also as solidarity and shared economic action\*

To achieve this the European Parliament shall set up a constitutional process.  
The Parliament shall appropriate itself the capacity to formulate a  
fundamental law in a democratic European Convention\*

In the new Parliament a federalist vanguard shall emerge capable of forging  
the will to propose a federal institutional structure for the Eurozone\*

The structure for the Eurozone goes together with the mechanisms  
necessary for governing its coexistence with the non-Eurozone states\*

A strong will shall emerge among the main political forces and its  
institutions to unite the pro-European factions in the parties,  
the representatives of European institutions and the governments\*

The launch of a political process, aimed at a federal project for the EU  
(possibly the Eurozone), shall take place based on a well thought out strategy

\* ideas from European Letter nr 63 (July 2014), Luciano Bolis European Foundation

## ***What is ESIC?***

Established 1963 in Antwerp by European federalists, after successful participation in two Free European Elections by the Congress of European People (an initiative by A. Spinelli). The Europees Studie- en Informatiecentrum, or European Study and Information Center (ESIC) is a non-profit organisation: with a library and documentation centre, two publications, a website called [ww.europadebat.be](http://ww.europadebat.be) (c), debates with students in 'Café-Europa' (c) and an annual academic cycle called 'Federalism, Democracy, Europe' (c), training sessions and lectures on European themes. Free of charge advise.

## ***About the author***

**Robert Verschooten** (1939), master in commercial, transportation and consular sciences (RHSA) (1961), post-university programme of business administration - PPB (IPO-Antwerp) (1975). Was active in logistics, sales, procurement, public relations and environmental matters. European federalist since 1956. Active in the Europees Studie- en Informatiecentrum (ESIC) as director (from 1977) and as president (from 1996). Is political adviser to UEF.be and member of EMB. Editor of ESIC Newsletter in Dutch (c), the Series 'Which Europe?' (c) and the ESIC website [www.europadebat.be](http://www.europadebat.be) (in Dutch). Initiator of Café-Europa (c) and of an annual academic cycle on 'Federalism, Democracy, Europe' (c) both are organized in conjunction with Europakring Antwerpen.

## ***ESIC publications***

- Numbers 41 up to 52 in the Series 'Which Europe?' are available in Dutch and English. Missing translations are forthcoming. These papers can be consulted at ESIC website: [www.europadebat.be](http://www.europadebat.be) (c), see ESIC/Publicaties. The ESIC Nieuwsbrief (Newsletter, only in Dutch) can be found on the same website.

- Number 41: 'The European federalists confronted with themselves' (c), (2010)
- Number 42: 'The European federalists confront Europe with their project' (c), (2010)
- Number 43: 'How can European federalists develop their project?' (c), (2011)
- Number 44: 'Which European federalism?' (c). (2011) (in Dutch)
- Number 45: 'Proposals to make the European project progress' (c), (2012)
- Number 46: 'Which society model leads to which political union for Europe?', (c) (2012)
- Number 47: 'How to communicate?' (c), (2013) (in Dutch)
- Number 48-49: 'Twelve Visions for a Federal Europe' (c), (2013)
- Number 50: 'Which Way towards the Future?', (c) (2014) (in Dutch)
- Number 51: 'Which political vision appeals most to you?' (c) (2014) (in Dutch)
- Number 52: 'Which blueprint for a post-national federal Europe?' (c) (2014)