

How to relaunch the European political project?

The Spinelli Group's event series in Rome

*Wednesday 2nd March 2016, Rome
Senate of the Republic & Chamber of Deputies*

The Spinelli Group is promoting a cycle of meetings in national capitals to present their proposals on the main challenges facing the European Union. In 2016 events are already planned to be held in Rome, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Warsaw. The meetings will also offer the occasion to discuss the reports being prepared by the European Parliament on the institutional future of the European Union within and beyond the current treaties. On the 2nd of March the Spinelli Group visited Rome, where it organised two high-level events:

1. The institutional future of the European Union within and beyond the Lisbon Treaty, Proposals from the European Parliament.

This workshop gathered an extensive list of outstanding representatives of Italian think-tanks, foundations, academics and EU experts. In the presence of the Emeritus President of the Italian Republic, **Giorgio Napolitano**, they examined the possibilities offered by the current EU Treaties in order to improve the functioning of the Union and the necessary changes to the Treaties needed to give a definitive settlement to the challenges Europe is facing. The challenges of the refugee and Schengen crisis and the threat of a Brexit served as political background to the analysis. The session was opened by an address by Mr **Pierferdinando Casini**, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Senate, followed by interventions of the MEPs **Mercedes Bresso**, **Elmar Brok** and **Sylvie Goulard** from the Spinelli Group, former Italian Prime Minister and Commissioner **Mario Monti**, and a debate with the experts and academics attending. The event has taken place in the premises of the Senate of the Republic.

2. Schengen, Euro, Democracy: from crisis to opportunities for unity.

This public debate with members of the Italian Parliament and the Italian Government and Italian Members of the European Parliament focused on the avenues for further political integration of the EU opened by the multiple crises our continent is facing. This second event took place in the Chamber of Deputies. The key speakers were: **Sandro Gozi**, Secretary of State for European Affairs and Policies, **Vincenzo Amendola**, Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, **Michele Bordo**, Chair of the Committee for European Union Policies in the Chamber of Deputies, **Vannino Chiti**, Chair of the Committee for European Union Policies in the Senate of the Republic, **Lia Quartapelle Procopio**, Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Foreign Affairs Committee and **Elly Schlein**, Member of the European Parliament.

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Summary of the discussions

The EU's inability to effectively make decisions to address the crisis it is currently facing is due to serious governance flaws. The EU is used as a scapegoat by national leaders, who are unwilling to recognise their lack of power to govern on their own issues of European dimension and deny the European Union the powers to do so. Successive mistakes made during the financial crisis have undermined trust between European governments and peoples, creating a dangerous North-South divide and eroding the credibility of the Union in the eyes of its citizens. The EU is now seen by many as a zero-sum game, unable to provide its citizens with any value added on top of the concessions obtained by their respective governments from the European Council.



"We need to make enter the European dimension into the local and national political debates", Sylvie Goulard

It is in the interest of the United Kingdom and of the EU that British decide to stay within the Union. However, according to some participants, the deal reached at the latest European Council's meeting about the membership of the United Kingdom creates a seriously negative precedent in the EU as it may provoke a domino effect, leading to other Member States to leave, or it may reinforce populism in Europe, by showing that a Member State can unilaterally impose its membership conditions on the rest of the Union. According to others, it may instead prevent a Brexit that may inflict a fatal blow to an already weak EU and may pave the way for a two-circles Europe with a more strongly integrated Eurozone and a less integrated circle of Member States

All available instruments, including those provided by the current Treaties and the treaty reform procedure, should be exploited to reinforce the economic and the political integration of the Eurozone, in order to increase risk-sharing and solidarity and foster convergence between national economies. Such reforms should start with a profound recast of the policy mix of the euro area. In order to overcome the divides provoked by the financial crisis and foster the general interest, the Eurozone should be equipped with its own budget, fed through genuine own resources. Finally, to complete such process, a strong European economic government should be created, with a Treasurer of the European Union, who would be the President of the Eurogroup and the Vice-President of the Commission.



"The Spinelli Group believes in a federal Europe. And we have the guts to say it", Guy Verhofstadt



"The Europe citizens were promised should not be losing time in figures. It should be the guarantor of rule of law in our countries", Sandro Gozi



"It is urgent to restore the authority of the European institutions if the EU is to address the refugee crisis", Giorgio Napolitano

The migration crisis is additional evidence of the institutional and governance weaknesses of the Union. Solidarity between Member States is at history lows, and the Visegrád group is adopting very dangerous positions that are preventing the EU from taking effective action. Therefore, national solutions prevail and fences are dressed across Europe. But building fences will not ensure European citizens' security. The Union must be united to face this challenge. A European Border and Coast guard and European intelligence capabilities together with a single European asylum and migration policy are a must. On the external front, only if it is united and makes progress towards a European foreign and defence policy will the EU be able to provide Jordan, Lebanon and Northern Africa with the support they need to preserve their stability and guarantee security within the Union and its neighbourhood. This is the only way the EU will be able to play a role on a world stage otherwise dominated by the US,

Russia and China.

The only possible way to relaunch the European political project is by renewing its goal and foundations. The European Union is not only an



"Pro-Europeans need to unite forces against populism and nationalism", Vincenzo Amendola

alliance of States concluding international agreements, but a source of rights and protection for its citizens. While some pretend that national sovereignty should prevail over the general interest should realise that sovereignty without the power to act is nothing more than a wet piece of

paper. The EU is the only way to give power and the ability to make decisions democratically to the European citizens. But the current situation shows that the 28-country block cannot move forward together at once. Italy has a very important role to play in this process, and could be a useful partner of an Italian-German initiative for the relaunch of the European political project. The six founding members of the first European Community maintain a special responsibility in the integration project and could use the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome next year for an initiative to open the institutional reforms of the EU. The European Parliament has a leading role to play in such a process, also by indicating a coherent set of reforms needed.



"Sovereignty without the power to act is just a wet piece of paper. Sharing sovereignty at EU level means giving sovereignty back to its citizens", Elmar Brok



"Italy pushing the EU to do more is not an attack on the Union, but a declaration of love", Lia Quartapelle Procopio

"Dublin is dead. Countries reunited after the fall of a wall are building new walls. Citizens need to react!", Elly Schlein

