

Declaration of Attica

by

the participants of the Summer School

“Who are we in Europe?”

Challenges and Perspectives of the European Community of Values

26.09.2015, Vravra, Greece

I.

We, the people of Europe, have a common history, a common present and we are destined to share a common future.

We build upon our cultural origins and we are committed to learn from our history of conflicts. Our community is based on democracy and the rule of law and these principles unify us in diversity. We are striving for peace and we will be united when facing global challenges.

We are committed to tolerance, equality, freedom, solidarity, human dignity and welfare.

These values are interpreted differently, but shared by all Europeans. We have to bring them to life and continue pursuing them. We build our common future upon human rights and our shared values.

Our goal is to strengthen our community of Europeans through exchange, dialogue, mutual understanding and respect.

We stand up for exchanges in economy, education, research and civil society. We insist on strengthening cultural dialogue: this includes travelling, learning languages and guaranteeing access to information on European issues. We are devoted to fighting disparities. We will continue to strive for democracy on the European level by fostering the standing and the transparency of EU institutions.

Europe becomes visible through our common symbols and our achievements in European integration. European unity is our future.

II.

Throughout history, Europe suffered from instability and wars, but we, the Europeans, overcame the past, achieved peace and established democracy. Progressing from an economic cooperation to an institutional system, creating a single market and a monetary union, we strengthened the unification of Europe. We are proud of our contribution to solve global challenges.

As a European Union, we strive to combine different visions for a common future. We are committed to diversity, thus we encourage each and every member state to participate and take responsibility towards European projects.

The European Union recognizes and respects the different economic structures of member states. Nevertheless, we aim for a higher level of socio-economic equality and prosperity.

Believing in democratic principles, we consider it to be crucial to strengthen the European Parliament in order to enhance legitimacy and transparency.

Facing multiple severe crises, the necessity of institutional and democratic deepening of the European institutions has become evident.

The crucial need for hope, confidence and particularly a perspective for the young generation strongly calls for stability and the reestablishment of trust between the European member states.

In an ever changing world, for the European Union to have sustainable impact it has to be united and act as a role model for peace, democracy and prosperity.

III.

The refugee crisis poses great challenges to the European Union. It has found itself unprepared to address this crisis. So far, EU members have approached the refugee crisis from a national-level, whereby reaching unanimous action has proved increasingly difficult. Moreover, limited funding and lack of a commonly adopted asylum policy have led EU member states treat the conditions inefficiently. Furthermore, the lack of a common Safe Country Concept has proved precarious towards addressing the main causes of refugee distribution in times of crisis.

It is hereby, that we suggest adopting measures in order to prevent an escalation of the humanitarian catastrophe in the Mediterranean. As short-term measures, we suggest establishing refugee taskforce missions, that include anti-smuggling and rescue missions. This includes informing refugees of their rights upon arrival and providing humanitarian aid. As long-term measures, we suggest the implementation of established and legal ways of immigration. At the same time, development of cooperation for supporting states in crises and diplomatic efforts involving neighbouring states have to be strengthened. Upon implementation of the above proposals, the European Union will offer a safe and legal way via which refugees can arrive.

We argue for refugee policy to become a part of the EU's competency. Therefore, we see the need to establish a European refugee agency, coordinating divergent national interests. Most importantly, a unified asylum policy is required, which includes a common list of Safe Countries for all EU member states. With regard to local conditions, a flexible quota-mechanism for distributing refugees among EU member states is vital. Each member state has to contribute to EU level

refugee policy and can rely on the solidarity of the other member states.

IV.

The economic crisis and rising populism and extremism in the Eurozone are significant European challenges. Versatile national policies and different economic structures deepen the consequences of the worldwide economic crisis. The situation in many crisis countries, including Greece, is characterized by a corrupted political system, tax evasion and the mismanagement of EU-funds. We highlight the alarming social and political consequences such as increased unemployment, political conflicts and loss of trust in the institutions.



Participants of the Summer School with Ms. Susanna Vogt, Head of the foreign office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Athens

In Greece there is a reluctance to take responsibility and to implement reforms. This leads to the loss of citizens' and investors' trust. Moreover, there is no adequate production base in Greece and the commercial deficit is high. Hence, it is for the national government to set up a clear roadmap for the next legislative period in order to restore stability and trust. Furthermore, Greece needs an improvement and enlargement of tax base and labor market alongside fiscal consolidation. Briefly, prudent management of EU-funds fosters the efficiency of bailouts and breaks the vicious circle.

The national-populist parties have gained ground in most EU member-states and on the supranational level. These parties have entered parliament, resulting in more people adhering to their ideology. This is the reflection of some people's needs and fears, such

as the loss of social security and the fear of erosion of national identities. The parties provide simplistic answers to complex questions.

The democratic parties, the media and society should convincingly address the underlying problems and show the benefits of the European Union.

V.

In turbulent times, our values are the lighthouse that leads us to an ever closer union.

The European Union is our chance to a common life in peace, freedom and democracy.

We have to defend it.