

# THE EUROPEAN UNION, UNEMPLOYMENT AND GLOBALISATION

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**Mouvement Européen**  
France

**DROIT** D'INVENTAIRE  
D'INVENTER

The *European Movement - France* and *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute* hosted the first debate in a cycle entitled “Right of Inventory - Right To Invent: 60 Years of Europe, Successes Worth Keeping - Solutions Yet To Be Invented” in Albi on 25 November 2013, allowing the audience to address the following issue: “Globalisation and Employment: the Challenges Facing the European Union”.<sup>1</sup>

Following a welcome address delivered by Anne Lapperouze, chair of the *European Movement - France - Tarn* (ME-F-Tarn), the debate was introduced by Yves Bertoncini, the director of *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute*, who presented the “Right of Inventory - Right To Invent” concept. The cycle consists of a series of eight debates, which will be held in medium cities such as Albi in order to allow people who live far away from Brussels and from Paris to ask questions and to air their opinions in connection with the four themes on which the European debate is currently focusing, namely employment, the euro, globalisation and democracy. The European elections on 25 May 2014 will be taking place at what is a pivotal moment both in institutional terms, with the renewal of the European Parliament and of the European Commission, and in political terms, with Europe in the grip of an economic and social crisis.

Thus it is necessary to draw up an inventory of the European Union’s achievements to date in order to be able to draft, or invent, the post-crisis European Union of the future.

The debate, moderated by ME-F-Tarn member Danièle Trouche, was then pursued by the audience with the following guests:

- Daniel Eclache, a company director and chair of MEDEF-Tarn;
- Jean-Louis Hormière, the president of the Tarn Chambre des Métiers (Chamber of Trades and Skills);
- Antoine Jankowski, the honorary Polish consul in Toulouse.



## 1. Employment, a social and fiscal harmonisation for a healthier intra-European competition

Bernard, a “convinced European” and a local councillor in Albi, wondered how it is going to be possible at this juncture to build a Europe of know-how, in other words how to share the available skills and required tools in order to ensure that the European Union (EU) can become more efficient in terms of employment, in view of globalisation.

Jean-Louis Hormière began with the artisan inventory in France. While the sector includes 1 million businesses, accounts for 3 million jobs, trains 200,000 young people and has a turnover of 300 billion euro, it appears to be threatened by European norms, because these norms allow Romanian, Polish and other businesses to work on French soil at hourly rates that defy all competition and that undermine the local economy. “It is all very well to forge political Europe and to open up the borders, if that is what you want, but in economic terms we should harmonise social policy at the very least”. Social and fiscal harmonisation is the essential premise for laying the groundwork for healthy intra-European competition.

Daniel Eclache added that the problem of norms is a product of the Europeans’ attitude, and the French one in particular, because they are incapable of calling their lifestyle into question and because they choose bureaucrats who are out of touch with real life to lead them. Thus the norms approved never reflect real situations but appear, rather, to be dictated by big business lobbies and they are impossible for small businesses to comply with (Jean-Louis Hormière). So it is not a matter of being anti-European but of their being opposed to the current rules and regulations; this, because it is inconceivable that anyone should be anti-European today (Daniel Eclache).

Antoine Jankowski recalled the Polish plumber controversy. If French artisans and small businesses are adversely impacted by the arrival of European businesses on their soil, it is partly because they lack staff with intermediate qualifications, due to the low regard in which manually-oriented trades are now held, and that this fact is stunting growth in the sector in France. Poland was also afraid of the European norms, yet they have allowed its farming industry to

restructure and to regain momentum. While harmonisation is necessary, competition is inevitable and it demands that businesses prove capable of remaining competitive. In fact, competition already exists within individual countries; in France, for instance, it exists between Paris and the provinces.

Restaurant-owner Bruno pointed out that people in his business are always affected by European norms, which are then compounded by French norms designed to strengthen those European norms. Thus he wondered at what level Europe stands, whether above or below the national level?

Yves Bertoncini specified that while European norms are binding, it is necessary to make the distinction between them and the French norms that frequently stiffen them. He also stressed that these European norms are requested by the member states themselves in order to ensure that all like goods meet the same standards and can therefore circulate freely. The European Union is involved in the infinitely small, such as regulations governing chicken cages, and in the infinitely large, such as, for instance, the Stability Pact. Yet it cannot be everywhere. In fact there are even areas where it is totally absent, such as education or social protection. Moreover, as Anne Lapperouze pointed out, European norms are approved in a democratic manner by the Council of the European Union, which comprises the member states, and by the European Parliament, which is made up, in its turn, of European parliamentarians elected by the citizens.



## 2. Globalisation, uniting to compete with the outside world on an equal footing

ME-F-Tarn member Claude, while reiterating the desire to see social and fiscal harmonisation within the European Union itself, wondered whether it might not be appropriate to introduce external protectionism in order to safeguard our European model against other continents that have a different regulatory environment.

No European country - not even Germany - can survive on the global scene on its own today, and the European Union is not capable of standing up to the Chinese, to the Brazilians, to the United States and so on. But competition and the stakes involved are global, whether we are talking, among other issues, about finance, research and innovation, energy or the environment. We have to adapt, both in order to keep abreast of the other world powers that comply with their own regulations (Antoine Jankowski), and to make the most of the globalisation process which spawns networks for sharing knowledge and skills (Anne Lapperouze).

The European Union already has a number of assets in its hand (Antoine Jankowski). It is the wealthiest market in the world, it is the world's leading trading power, and it creates patents and spawns innovation. Where the training of apprentices is concerned, the European Union permits inter-country exchanges, thanks in particular to twinning schemes. There is a sharing of techniques and of knowledge which it is necessary to continue developing (Jean-Louis Hormière). And by the same token, in symbolic terms, if Olympic medals were all lumped into the same EU

basket in the sports field, the Union would be way out in front of everyone else (Antoine Jankowski).

Open markets are a necessity and protectionism makes no sense (Daniel Eclache). Whether inside or outside its borders, the European Union needs to improve and to extend the way it communicates, and it needs to do so in a more united manner. This is especially crucial in negotiations with external powers, as we can see, for instance, from our experience with Chinese solar panels or with Russian gas, where each European country negotiates under its own steam (Antoine Jankowski).

## 3. 25 May 2014, choosing your European Union

Self-employed builder Daniel wondered whether the electorate is going to bother turning out for the upcoming European elections at all, because he has the feeling that the issues raised by politicians for this election are not the right ones. And besides, how is it possible still to believe in Europe today with everything that is going on?

By the same token, Denis, a candidate in the upcoming local elections in Castres, wondered what we should expect now, after the European Union of peace wrought by reconciliation between old enemies and after the European Union of abundance brought about by structural funds. The citizens are asking themselves this question because they can only see the constraints and the norms, whereas in fact economic redress and renewal can come only from the European Union.



There is a strong fear that we may witness another display of record-breaking absenteeism at the upcoming European elections; and indeed we undoubtedly will, because the European Union has no direct say in a number of issues, such as housing, social protection and security, that impact the European citizen's daily life (Yves Bertoncini). But that should not call the legitimacy of European democracy into question. Only 42% to 49% of Swiss citizens go to vote in their country's federal elections, for instance, yet no one questions the system's legitimacy for all that. We may hope that in our case the turnout will be higher, because it is crucial for people to voice their views on the European Union, even if those views are negative, in order to populate the European

Parliament with representatives of our choosing. In fact, it is particularly important in this instance because the European elections on 25 May 2014 are not only going to designate members of European Parliament, they are also bound to influence the European Commission's policy line and the appointment of its president (Yves Bertoncini).

"If there are two important kinds of election today, those are local elections, because they are [...] our daily bread, and European elections, because they are the vision [we have] of the future". (Daniel Eclache).

1. Find the pictures and podcast of the event of the 25 November 2013.

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