

REFLECTIONS ON THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

by Francesc de Dalmasas

On June 7th, 375 million Europeans were able to decide the future of the European Union. We say ‘were able to’ because only 43.5% decided to exercise their right to vote. It is a disgracefully low figure that, beyond the results themselves, leads one to ponder the deficiencies in the process of the construction of Europe.

There is an expression in Catalan that is used to refer to a badly planned action, or a process that fails to progress adequately, which is literally ‘to put the cart before the ox’. It is probably the kind of expression one could use when referring to the European Union.

In the post-electoral period we have witnessed how the blame for low voter turnout has been passed between the political parties, the media, the parties at a local level and finally the electorate, in a never-ending chain. It makes sense, since no one is solely responsible, in the same way that no one is com-

pletely innocent. We should like to outline three areas in which we ought to work both politically and socially if we wish the process of the construction of Europe to not become artificial and alien to European civil society.

In first place, there is the institutional character of the European Union. There is no sense in talking about the importance of the European Parliament for fifteen days if, for the next five years, it is hard to discern directly how its stance or decisions affect our lives. Certainly the media and the Euro-parliamentarians themselves and their political background should share part of the blame. Nevertheless, the Parliament itself should have strategies for bringing European citizens closer to this common space. The fact that half the voters stayed at home during the European elections is a stark reminder of how Europeans feel disconnected and distanced from the European Parliament.



The second area for discussion is at the state level. The state's European passion on the eve of the elections makes no sense when the majority only aspire to a symbolic European Union. They show no predisposition to relinquish state sovereignty in order to enhance continental sovereignty. The blame and bad reputation lies with the governing parties of states which are clearly against the Union. However, it is a factor common to the way the vast majority of European governments act, even if it does not appear in their official discourse.

The third area for concern, the national context, is also strongly tied to the states' incapacity to share sovereignty and outline a Europe where all nations, languages and cultures are present on an equal footing. It is difficult to mobilise a majority vote among Europeans when a large part of its population sees how their language, their culture and their traditions are not present or recognised in the European institutions.

In short, the process of building a common Europe cannot fall hostage to state power, since those same states end up being the main obstacles to achieving the objectives of the European Union.

**THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUREAUCRATIC
CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE MUST GIVE WAY TO
THE POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The administrative and bureaucratic construction of Europe must give way to the political construction of a European Union that counts on and recognises all the elements that make up contemporary Europe and that goes far beyond the Europe of states.

Europe's future, without doubt, is the Europe of nations.