

# DEMOCRACY, QUO VADIS

Resolution adopted by the EPP Political Assembly, Brussels, 4th-5th December 2017



Having regard to the fact that:

- Europe has witnessed several national referenda and election campaigns in the last few years which were dominated by political polarisation; has witnessed the rise of populist parties in various countries and the sudden power grabs they have made as well; and has also witnessed politics being characterised by these parties as a fight between good and evil, the defenders of oppressed citizens versus a supposedly corrupt elite;
- Coinciding with these developments, heated debates have started as to the legitimacy and sustainability of our democratic political systems as well as regarding the concepts of 'populism' and 'democracy';
- In the meantime, the digital revolution has caused a tremendous change in the way people communicate and interact; that social media is only a part of this change; and that the role and influence of both 'old' and, in particular, 'new' media towards politics has contributed to changing electoral campaigning and political decision-making;
- Trust in political parties has been declining for a long period of time, as has trust in nearly all political institutions; that the people's parties, with their bases in all levels of society, over the past several decades have lost many members and can no longer rely on their core electorates;
- We have to realise that there are no quick answers to solving the challenges of populism and democratic legitimacy;

## The EPP:

### 01

Underlines the importance of addressing the causes of the lack of democratic legitimacy and the rise of populist trends;

- Recalls that 20th-century history has dramatically shown, in Western as well as in Eastern Europe, how a democratic system, overnight and at the hands of only a few political leaders, can be transformed into ruthless dictatorships;
- Underlines that representative and participatory democracy is the basis of the functioning of the European Union (Lisbon Treaty, Art. 10)\*;
- Calls on the EU to actively pursue its policy to involve citizens in the democratic life of the Union and to take decisions at a level as close as possible to citizens;
- Asks the European Commission to prioritise projects to analyse and further strengthen the democratic functioning of the electoral systems of EU Member States and other European countries;

### 02

Highlights in particular the importance of civic education; underlines that civic education constitutes a double investment: as a way to share and promote our democratic values within all socially and culturally different communities and to empower people to take up their role as responsible citizens;

- Asks the Member States to ensure adequate civic and political education, as well as training in digital skills and media literacy, to all young people and students, as well as to all children of economic migrants or refugees entering the Member States;

### 03

Stresses that democracy is a joint civic responsibility which implies that all societal actors, as well as all citizens, are called upon to contribute to politics with the aim of improving the well-being of all inhabitants, including minority groups, and to making Europe a home for all of us;

- Calls upon civil society organisations, such as sports clubs and cultural associations, churches and mosques, as well as employer and labour organisations, to empower their members to participate in the democratic life both in their countries and in the EU;

### 04

Underlines that our societies need professional, independent, ethical and fact-based journalism; notices that the growing and pervasive dissemination of 'fake news' challenges our fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of information, as well as threatens our democratic political systems;

- Calls upon media companies seriously to take up their role as custodians of the freedom of speech and democracy, e.g. by boosting their efforts to identify and counter 'fake news', online as well as offline.
- Urges Member States and non-EU governments to put an end to the tangled interests between politics, media concerns and capital investors;
- Asks the European Commission and non-EU governments to provide political as well as financial support to independent media;

# 05

Underlines that the inclusive political participation of all citizens has to be stimulated by all political parties; stresses that the core of a political party is its values, ideas and ideology and that these preferably are represented by a charismatic leader whose integrity is undisputed;

- Asks Member States to develop future-oriented means of political participation: in particular, with a focus on the use of social media and inclusive surveys via the internet;
- Calls upon EPP member parties to renew their methods of communicating with people, taking into account that listening must be a core element here, just as people must also be called on to take up their role as responsible citizens;
- Calls upon EPP member parties to make use of their political values in formulating new ideas that resonate with people;
- Calls upon EPP member parties to present themselves as dynamic organisations that are constantly renewing themselves and that aim to attract voters from all societal levels;
- Calls upon EPP member parties to compile inclusive candidate lists on the basis of diversity, including a minimum criterion of 40% representation by each gender;

\*Art. 10, Lisbon Treaty: 1. The functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy. 2. Citizens are directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament. Member States are represented in the European Council by their Heads of State or Government and in the Council by their governments, themselves democratically accountable either to their national Parliaments, or to their citizens. 3. Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen. 4. Political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union.

**If you have any question  
you would like to ask  
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