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More European integration?

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By Leo Klinkers |

On Thursday 9 May 2019, the European Council will meet in the Romanian city of Sibiu to discuss the four key tasks which, according to its President Donald Tusk, should constitute the EU's strategic agenda for the next five years. These are: protection of citizens, a strong economy, a sustainable and social society and the defence of European values and interests.

I will leave aside whether this broad definition can be called 'core tasks'. I also refrain from a substantive discussion of these core tasks. The essence of the Sibiu agenda is: 'let us try to promote more integration with fewer goals.'

Well, as soon as 'integration' is on the table, we are dealing with the increasingly criticized pursuit of the Treaty of Lisbon of an 'ever closer union'. The Dutch Parliament recently adopted a motion to remove this phrase from the Treaty. The reason for this is that they want to put a stop to the further integration of the EU countries.

Few concepts in the legal EU-framework are as poorly understood as the concept of 'integration'. Due to the nature of the Treaty of Lisbon, which gives the European Council the power to take any decision that, according to the Council, serves the EU's objectives – and thus overrides the principle of subsidiarity – the Council's decision making works both *de facto* and *de iure* as 'assimilation' of the EU countries. By its very legal nature the Treaty imposes top-down measures that force the member states to become in line as much as possible.

Strictly speaking, the call to integrate further forces countries to assimilate in the sense of adapting to one another as much as possible and thus taking on each other's characteristics. This is one of the most important causes of conflict within the EU, as well of the Brexit drama. Countries, parliaments and people do not want to assimilate. Not only do they want to preserve their own sovereignty, but also their cultural identity. This need for further integration is one of the many systemic errors within the EU's current intergovernmental operating system, driven by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Well, such a systemic error is absent within a federal operating system, based on a federal Constitution. In a federation, the Member States retain their sovereignty and cultural identity. They share this sovereignty with a federal body that takes care of a limitative set of interests that the Member States can no longer defend on their own. It is only at the level of that federal body that integration takes place. Integration in the sense of taking care of a few common European interests rather than operating on an array of conflicting national interests. In a European federation there is no integration in the sense of assimilation at the Member State level. They retain everything they already have: parliament, government, judiciary and their own policy areas. Countries with Presidents or Kings retain this in a European federation.

The Lisbon Treaty destroys the diversity of the member states. A European federation preserves it. So, the correct answer to the question in the title of this article ('More European integration?') should be: 'Yes, but only if properly understood and applied.' And that is within a European federation, based on a federal constitution that lists the core tasks, being common European interests, exhaustively.

Those who claim that a European federation would be guilty of further integrating in the sense of assimilation and would destroy the sovereignty and cultural identity of the Member States do not know what they are talking about. People who support Tusk's abovementioned strategic agenda should tell him that pursuing these core tasks will only be successful in the constitutional and institutional framework of the federal Unites States of Europe. A federation is the only form of state that provides his wish of more integration, which takes place at federal level with the full agreement of the participating Member States. That way, they not only don't lose anything, but just get extras.

For a better understanding of this matter I refer also to the pages 33-39 of my book 'Sovereignty, Security and Solidarity'.

Mr.Leo Klinkers book trailer is available here: <http://www.faef.eu/trailer/>.


 Leo Klinkers – Editor

Leo Klinkers graduated in 1968 from the Faculty of Law at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. After a few years working in local government, he became responsible for research and education in public administration at the Law Faculty of Utrecht from 1971 until 1983. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis in 1974 on open access to Government documents. Between 1971 and 1983 Leo Klinkers developed a method for interactive bottom-up policymaking. This methodology has been published in a number of books and articles and applied in many projects in the Netherlands and abroad. Since 1983 he has worked as an independent consultant in public administration in several countries, as well as for the EU and the UN. In 2013 he was co-author of the 'European Federalist Papers' with Herbert Tombeur. He recently finished his last book 'Sovereignty, Security and Solidarity, arguing why and how the present intergovernmental administrating system of the EU should be replaced by a federal system and thus creating The United States of Europe, making America Europe's little brother. He is actually a co-founder and member of the Promoting Committee of FAEF (Federal Alliance of European Federalists)

Image: Tim Marshall


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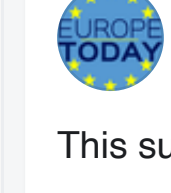
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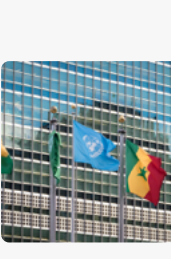

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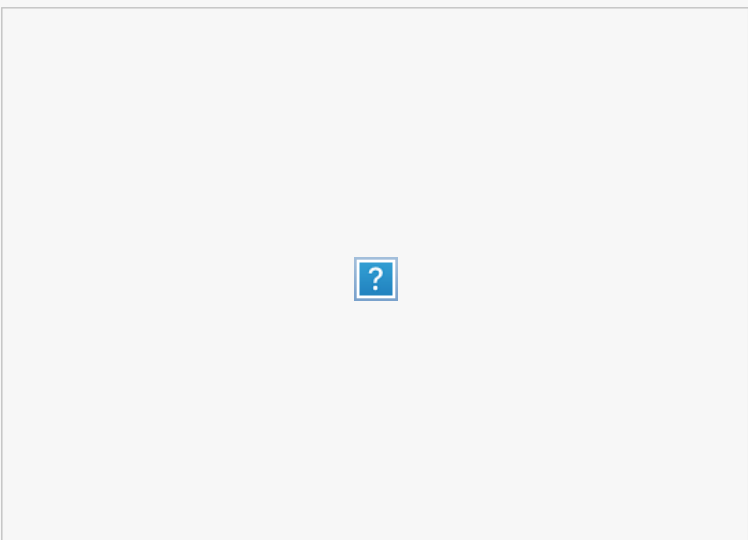
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