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How can European Federalists develop their Project ?

Towards a more systematic approach

by

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Dedicated to those who favour
a Dynamic,
a Pluralistic,
Democratic and Federal Europe

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Aim

The papers in the Series 'Which Europe?', numbers 41, 42, 43 and 44 are complementary.

Paper 43 contributes to the study of the question how and by which input European federalists will be able to achieve their objectives. This question can be rephrased as: which type of organisation do European federalists need in order to achieve their goals? Meaning a thorough resourcing exercise by European federalists.

Paper 43 elaborates again on a three stages scenario, corresponding to a gradual build-up of the campaign of European federalists. Together with a three stage scenario a correlation is shown between the various components of action. Attention goes to the right coupling of time, means, messages and objectives. It takes the form of a case study which is neither final nor complete. Just a try-out waiting for discussion and improvement.

In addition a fourth paper (nr 44), with the title: 'European federalism' is in preparation. Its introduction deals with some recent theoretical basic concepts of federalism. Further thought goes to a federal set-up in Europe

Introduction

Confronted with the complexity of local and/or international (interregional) action many European federalist leaders started to believe that improvisation and handy short-cuts would do the job. Is this an easygoing attitude or a conscious choice? As a consequence many important ideas were never expressed nor scrutinized.

Many unsaid facts and ideas will now have to be explicitated loud and clear. Setting high implied goals requires input of adequate resources and co-ordination. Such an exercise can possibly necessitate scaling down to realistic objectives.

Anyway, a far-reaching systematisation, interregional co-operation and gradual semi-professionalisation cannot be eluded if effectivity of European federalist movement's action is to improve considerably.

Even a pragmatic approach by leadership will require a minimum level of clarification (ideawise), planning and coordination (actionwise).

Lip-service or iddle words won't do the job. Amateurism and free-riding shall be banned. Effectivity is the key-word. Insight, commitment, determination, co-operation and communication skills are among the much needed capabilities of leadership of the European federalists (both in the international secretariat, as in local sections).

Each activity will have its place in a global action plan. Each activity constitutes a valuable contribution to global objectives. The effect of each activity will be measurable as to enable realistic impact evaluation.

Correct setting of objectives is one of many starting points. What do European federalists want to achieve in which timeframe? Which stages shall be acknowledged? A split up in various stages will enable them to better understand the specificity of each stage. Starting from the objectives, priority do-lists will be formulated in each stage. Next comes a communication plan with, among others, key messages to be conveyed to specific priority target audiences.

European federalists shall be aware of the interaction of various aspects of action. Therefore different stages and their intrinsic differences will be identified (a three stages scenario). Almost everything, viz tactics, resources, methods and communication, is different in each of the different stages. Proper correlation within each stage is conditional to the outcome. Mixing elements from different stages will prove unproductive.

A global view is much needed by European federalists. Ensuing global actionplanning is missing as well. A global view will help European federalists to better understand the interaction between ambitious objectives and the corresponding resources and mobilizing ideas.

Mobilizing messages will obviously originate from a strategy and an ideology which have been carefully elaborated.

Three successive stages will be considered. These stages revert to the three scenario-concept already outlined in paper number 42. In this paper these stages are further elaborated from an operational viewpoint.

Each institutional reform, e.g. the revision of the Treaty of Lisbon, can mean the start of a new stage. In order to speak of a reform, it will carry adequate 'fundamental change'. More co-decision and more fiscal competences of European Parliament, as established by the Treaty of Lisbon, equal a limited but positive fundamental change.

The ultimate stage, viz the federal stage, shall deal with the sharing of national sovereignty in as many European policy-domains as possible.

Eurosceptics say likelihood of federalism is sheer speculation. European federalists anyway have to include this stage in their long term plan, since it represents the end goal of European federalists' project.

This paper is not complete. Conclusions will therefore be provisional. The very aim is to encourage further reflection on this subject.

Description of subsequent stages

Where does each stage start or stop? Following (theoretical) features and context illustrate a possible split-up.

1. **Stage one:** European institutional situation up to July 2011).

- **Features:** A hybrid system where intergovernmentalism and community method cohabit, resulting in a political system with confederal features.

- **Context:** Both internal and external factors induce European decision makers to **react** instead of being pro-active.
Most **technical** matters can be decided by majority vote and co-decision.
Political decisions, involving the future, are still subject to unanimity vote.
New political opening meets with much resistance from member states.
This hybrid political system reached its limits and can no longer be maintained.

2. **Stage two:** pre-federal stage (including revision of Treaty of Lisbon)

- **Features:** Stage one hybrid system continues, but is different on certain instances.

- **Context:** Both internal and external factors **force** European decision makers to start acting in a more **pro-active** way.
Nation states see themselves forced to extend the scope of competences of the EU beyond the limitative interpretation of the Treaty of Lisbon (first steps were set towards economic, financial and monetary governance).
This extension of competences is important since aimed at improving effectivity and credibility of the EU and the eurozone.

This extension is based on intergovernmental cooperation, meaning that initiative, elaboration and monitoring is being entrusted to nation states. Nation states seized the political agenda from the European Commission. European Commission is losing its power of initiative.

'Too limited respons' by member states cannot be maintained, since generating inefficiency and is undermining credibility of the EU.

Member states display too little determination to make a political opening.

European Parliament consolidates its newly acquired power of co-decision.

This phase continues distinct development of various EU competences.

The system's limitations reach a breaking, justifying an early summoning of a European Convention.

3. **Stage three:** federal stage

- **Features:** Progressive and systematic **sharing of national sovereignty.**

Political governance: sharing of responsibility, legitimacy and ownership.

- **Context:** European Convention will likely produce a new (fundamental) reform (a final one?) resulting in a European Constitution or treaty.

This reform will enable 'in depth' harmonisation, as well as better integration of policy domains.

Convention's reform will strengthen the federal institutions, or at least the federal character of these institutions and generate complete power sharing.

European Commission will wield legal initiative, control and monitoring of European legislation.

European Commission will retrieve sole capacity to propose inclusive and framework legislation.

European Council will together with European Parliament restrict themselves to the formulation of general orientations,

European Parliament will supervise and possibly sanction European Commission for not delivering as agreed.

Member states can no longer turn down proposed legislation (by European Commission) without ample and public justification (before European Parliament).

European Court of Justice will always be competent.

Basic input

As a basic input for the activity of European federalists, following domains shall be formalated: ideology, strategy, manifesto, tactics, organisational set-up, working methods, resources and communication.

Ideology of European federalists

European federalists' ideas, constitute the basis of their societal and political project for Europe.

Its formulation is an ongoing effort of reflection, deepening, enrichment and adaptation. Ideology is for internal use. Only parts surface when needed.

Strategy of European federalists

Strategy is a paper for internal use by European federalists.

Strategy is a benchmark for action, ideas' generation and organisation of European federalists.

A formulated strategy usually lasts for a period between two treaties.

What is strategy of European federalists about?

- Evaluation of past and current situation in the European Union.
- Formulation of end goal of European federalists.
- Formulation of broad outlines of subsequent stages.
- Formulation of final and/or intermediary objectives of European federalists.
- Formulation of the means to achieve the end and/or intermediary goals.
- Formulation of a federal project (political system based on federal-principles), including the broad outlines of a new (innovative) societal project for Europe.

Manifesto of European federalists

A manifesto is a paper for internal and external use.

A manifesto can be called the abbreviated version of the overall strategy, presented in a clear, concise and readable form. This manifesto will receive broad distribution in priority target audiences (including supporters).

Tactics of European federalists

Will be formulated for internal use and be implemented by all concerned in the organisation. Tactics will be accepted by the larger majority of sections and antennas (the smallest operational local group). Ownership of this set of joint action tactics will be promoted actively.

Implementation of tactics goes through an exhaustive set of operational instruments.

What do tactics include?

- How shall the European federalists communicate? What, how, when, to whom? How often? Through which channels?
- Will communication seek direct confrontation or is a prudent approach preferable?
- What will relationship be with national and European decision makers? How will European federalists remain independent and keep their freedom of action and speech?
- How will the number of capable supporters be increased?
- How will European federalists organise their network of regional sections? How to build a durable network?
- How to involve supporters in the action programme of European federalists?

European federalists' organisation

What type of organisation do European federalists need in order to be able to achieve the ambitious objectives set forward? This question is often eluded.

European federalists need a dense geographical network illustrating vicinity with people, working according to federal principles.

This network is based on regional sections or antennas, possibly assisted by national sections and an international secretariat.

The impact of local sections depends on their capacity to cover different operational aspects, viz communication, as local contactpoint relaying messages to local priority target audiences (local people know best whom to address), ideological input, organisational input, distribution of messages and edition of publications, websites, local contacts and organising public debate. The minimum capability of an antenna is the function of distribution centre/contactpoint.

Working methods of European federalists

A large number of sections and/or antennas implies clear rules as how to operate the network. Compliance with these operational rules by all sections/antennas is essential for the effectivity of the network.

Well implemented operating procedures are like lubricants. They make a decentralised network of cooperating sections and antennas achieve the assigned goals. It replaces uneffective improvisation by clear cut and workable procedures, such as work distribution and responsibilities. Action can be speeded up if needed.

Resources of European federalists

Includes human and financial resources of European federalists. Doers and thinkers shall complete each other. They will show mutual respect. Supporters are all volunteers. Each of them will be capable and willing to assume the function he or she accepted. Commitment to the given word and acceptance of the majority rule are essential for the overall capability of the network.

Financial independence from nation states' funding is possibly the best option. Regional authorities and European Parliament are possibly more suitable financial sponsors.

Communication

The visible action of European federalists, through its regional sections and antennas, is primarily communication. Communication by European federalists will reflect the various degrees of what the target audiences will (or should) have assimilated. Following subsequent stages shall be discerned: acknowledgement of our ideas, sympathy with some of our ideas, a positive attitude towards European federalists, more or less familiar with the core ideas of European federalists, emotional long term loyalty leading to commitment, willingness to support more or less actively European federalists. These various stages do not necessarily apply to one and the same person or target audience.

Mutual interaction

Mutual interaction between operational objectives, priorities and communicated messages.

In phase 1: post-Treaty of Lisbon (estimated 2011-2013)

- **Operational objectives** of European federalist sections, antennas and interregional cooperation:
 - Increase regional and interregional joint ideological ground.
 - Increase number of motivated/able/independent doers and thinkers.
 - Increase motivation/training of active supporters.
 - Improve and focus communication effort by European federalists through profiling of target groups and make up homogeneous groups.
 - Offer a well defined European project: limited in time, objectives and well connected to the needs of people in Europe.
 - Broaden action basis of European federalists throughout Europe.
 - Call on political key-figures in order to exert influence on the political agenda.

- **Priorities** for European federalist sections and antennas:
 - Initiate formulation in working groups, where sections' specialists' will join forces, of joint strategy, tactics, methods and communication plan.
 - Start training of members, supporters, key-persons (staff).
 - Start attracting specialists, needed for political campaigning.
 - Start trying out differentiated communication towards specific target groups.
 - Start making try-outs to measure and evaluate communication effects.
 - Create and coach new local sections and antennas.

- **Messages** to the public (not yet an operational formulation):
 - Europe will harm itself considerably if defaulting to adapt itself.
 - Intergovernmental and community methods reach the limits of their potential.
 - Too limited integration progress doesn't meet demand by society and people.
 - Member states clinging to national sovereignty cause European potential to fall short of needed political innovation.
 - Wrong decisions by member states cost society very much (employment, growth, creativity, prosperity).
 - Member states will not disappear. Their competences will be adjusted.
 - What is good for the European Union, is good for the member states.
 - Expenditure at European level will be better spent than at national level.

In phase 2: pre-federal stage (estimated 2014-2020)

- **Operational objectives** of European federalist sections, antennas and interregional coordination:
 - Consolidate interregional cooperation of European federalist-sections/antennas.
 - Consolidate flow of new ideological input.
 - Extend external networking and preparedness of third parties to cooperate with European federalists.
 - Enlarge reach of audiences
 - Start branding of European federalists' image.

- **Priorities** for European federalist sections, antennas and interregional coordination:
 - Adapt organisational set-up in order to cope with extra workload.
 - Get sections, antennas and interregional coordination operate by joint programmes.
 - Start up larger scale interregional campaigns.
 - Start up proper communication with specific target audiences.
 - Adjust operational objectives to new input.
 - Develop think tanks and complete training schemes.
 - Develop a full set of joint operational objectives and a proper communication plan.

- **Messages** conveyed to the public (not yet an operational formulation):
 - Federalism is the only suitable political system for Europe.
 - Federalism has great potential of beneficial effects.
 - Europe is a safeguard of prosperity, peace and effectivity.
 - Europe enables future-oriented development.
 - Europe is the right answer to globalisation.
 - People can safely 'feel at home' in federal Europe.
 - Europe needs to be supported by people (democratic system with free expression and participation).

In phase 3: federal stage (start estimated 2020)

- **Operational objectives** of European federalist sections, antennas and interregional coordination:
 - European federalists capable of launching large scale campaigns.
 - European federalists capable of reaching larger target groups.
 - European federalists able to influence political agenda.
 - European federalists accepted as representing the European federalist ideology.
 - Ideology of European federalists acknowledged as an unavoidable alternative to nation state thinking.

- **Priorities** for European federalist sections, antennas and interregional coordination:
 - Adapt organisational set-up in order to cope with extra workload.
 - Implement a truly interregional cooperation model between (almost) all sections
 - Professionalise differentiated communication process.
 - Get professional and/or academic advice on concept and implementation of joint interregional campaigns.
 - Identity building in larger parts of public opinion, through improved public spirit and ownership campaigns.

- **Messages** to the public (not yet an operational formulation):
 - European constitution is a safeguard for future development.
 - European constitution is a warrant for equitable European public interest.
 - True popular participation and adapted communication (top-down and bottom-up) will make people feel better at ease about Europe.
 - Public debate will create ownership and will reduce number of misperceptions.
 - People's participation will reduce anxiety and suspicion on Europe.

The type of organisation European federalists need is related to the three phase scenario. The type of activity European federalists want to develop will determinate the

organisational model they need. An underperforming organisation will never be able to achieve ambitious objectives.

Communication

'Everything is connected with internal and external communication'

- Preliminary questions:

- Why is the message of European federalists not well received?
- Why is the message of European federalists not well understood?
- Why is the impact with the receiver not durable? (forgetting the message).
- Why is the message of European federalists not reaching those, whom they want to reach?

- Causes of chaotic communication?

- Absence of joint strategy.
- Absence of joint image of European federalists.
- Absence of adequately formulated message(s).
- Use of wrong mix of communication channels or messages.
- Professional communication practice is disregarded.

- Why do European federalists need a joint communication plan?

- Each local section is too small to represent the whole of the federalist movement.
- Individual action falls in a void.
- Communication by the International secretariat is not relevant unless actively duplicated by all sections (or at least by most sections). Unity of ideas and action will be displayed.
- Prior to initiate joint communication, most sections will share the same strategy.

- Preconditions for good communication by European federalists:

- Which image do they want to propagate about themselves? Do they know who the 'other' are? What are European federalists? What not? What makes them unique?
- Which are the major groups able to help them materializing their goals?
- They shall be able to bring differentiated messages. Civil journalists are one of these target groups. Can European federalists catch their attention?
- Content, form, style and phasing of message(s) shall connect closely with each of these target groups.
- The medium brings the message or no message without medium.
- Start with the target group closest to European federalist ideas.
- Summarize strategy of European federalists in a nutshell (one liner), e.g. 'With 'us' towards a brighter future' or 'We care about our common future'.
- An effective communication plan, even individual communication, will pass through a number of compulsory stages.

- Other features of communication:

- Capacity of the message to catch attention of target audiences.
- Capacity to inform.

- Capacity to convince.
- Capacity to enhance relations.
- Mobilizing capacity (actively involving public).

- Different types of communication:

- Organisational and reputation supportive communication.
- Mobilizing communication.
- Marketing communication (is not considered).
- Fundraising communication (with caution, see elsewhere).
- Stimulation of good relations (also by direct personal contact).
- Cross communication (how can different channels strengthen each other?) and integrated communication (one integrated communication plan).
- Distinction between own and external channels (intermediaries, key figures) and media.

Basic questions

Following basic questions will be raised:

First question: What is the final objective of European federalists? Obviously the introduction of a political system based on the principles of federalism. The strategy of European federalists will outline how to reach this goal.

Second question: Will organisation and management of European federalists be different in each of the three phases as outlined above? The answer is affirmative. Capability is scaling up during the gradual build up of the network/organisation/action.

Third question: Will close interregional cooperation open up access to the European political scene and to people of Europe? Representativity and credibility, at that level, can facilitate this access. On its own, at local level, no section will ever achieve that effect.

Fourth question: Are European federalists willing to accept the consequences of their political ambitions? This implies need of ultimate semi-professionalisation of its leadership and its key-supporters.

Fifth question: Are European federalists willing to effectively cooperate at European level in order to become credible, respectable and representative? Close cooperation is a pre-condition.

Sixth question: Are European federalists willing to apply federalist principles to their interregional organisation? Ultimately sections/antennas and their leaders will gain useful experience and will set the necessary examples by implementing federalist principles into their local organisation and that of a UEF-network.

Seventh question: Can identity of a section survive in a context of joint action objectives? A proper identity will enable local sections to be trusted by local people and be accepted as one of them. Autonomy applies to the way joint objectives will locally be translated in organisation and action. Autonomy shall never be invoked for not willing to cooperate interregionally, since all sections have participated in the formulation of that joint action.

Minorized opinions shall demonstrate fair-play and accept majority rule.

Eighth question: What will be the role of an interregional coordination group? Representation of the sections/antennas at interregional level will reduce the feeling of being directed, and boost participation in jointly decided cooperation. Interregional coordination will emerge from bottom-up and top-down communication and interaction.

Operational recommendations

- Formulation, within six months, of the main basic ideas (as outlined above). Within one year European federalists will have formulated clear answers to all basic questions where they shall have an opinion. This effort will be facilitated by the consultation of all regional sections. Joint study groups will coordinate this effort and will come forward with consolidated ideas and basic texts. These texts will be approved at the annual meeting at interregional level.
- Next year will see ownership of basic ideas and participation by the regional sections improve.
- This consolidation effort will not hinder continuation of planned activities (until a joint programme has been agreed on).
- The International secretariat of European federalists can play a role of facilitator in this joint effort of resourcing.

About the author

Robert Verschooten (1939)

Masters in business, transport and consular sciences (RHSA) (1960-1961)

Programme of business management (IPO) (1975)

Was active in logistics, sales, procurement, public relations, environmental matters

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This paper is also **available in Dutch**: 'Hoe ontwikkelen de Europese Federalisten hun project?', 2011. Can be found in: www.europadebat.be under ESIC/publicaties